

RE | SHAPING POLICIES FOR CREATIVITY

We share, we act, we build



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Making Creativity Matter

The future of creativity stands at a critical juncture. Today, most countries have established public bodies with mandates and budgets for culture, yet public funding for culture accounts for less than 0.6% of GDP. While the global trade in cultural goods reached US\$254 billion in 2023, it is mostly dominated by the Global North. Furthermore, development aid for culture accounts for just 0.15% of total aid.



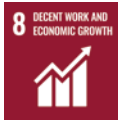


Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the creative landscape. Never has creative content been so abundant, nor the tools so widely accessible. Yet for many, stable employment and fair pay are out of reach.

These technological shifts are widening existing digital divides. In developed countries, 67% of individuals hold essential digital skills as opposed to only 28% in developing contexts. At the same time, the proliferation of AI-generated content, online harassment and censorship generate an increasingly hostile environment for creators, especially women, Indigenous Peoples and other vulnerable communities.

These challenges urgently call for collaborative global governance. As part of the Convention's critical platform for policy dialogue, *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity* contributes to this collective endeavour. It offers updated insights on how countries are navigating these challenges and evidence-based recommendations to inspire policy action.

Cultural goods
trade is valued at
US\$ 254 billion
in 2023

MONITORING FRAMEWORK OF THE 2005 CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF THE DIVERSITY OF CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS

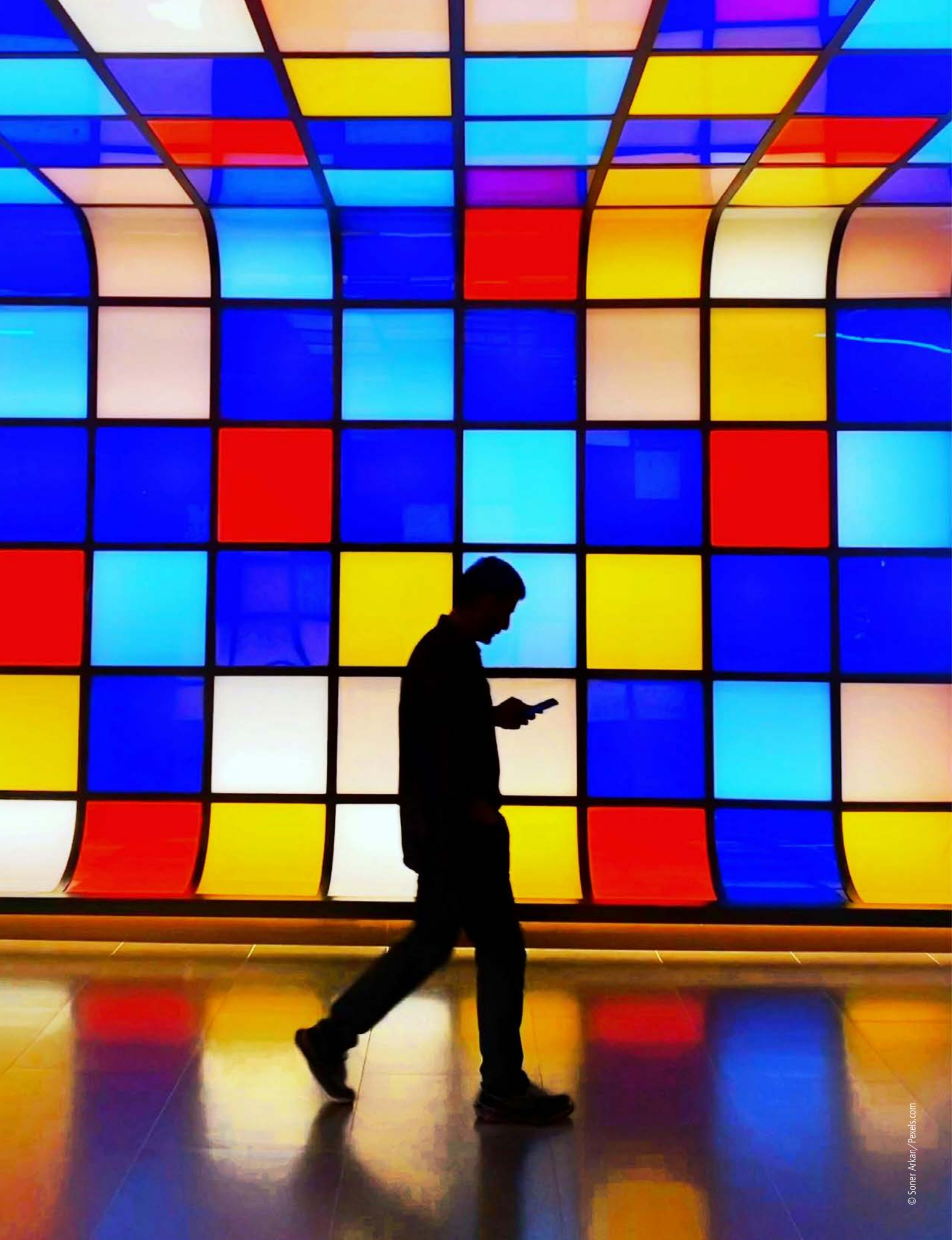
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	<p>Ensure the sovereign right of States to adopt and implement policies to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions, based on informed, transparent and participatory processes and systems of governance</p>			
GOALS	 <p>SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS OF GOVERNANCE FOR CULTURE</p>			
2030 SDGs	   			
EXPECTED RESULTS	<p>National policies and measures support creation, production, distribution and access with regard to diverse cultural activities, goods and services and strengthen informed, transparent and participatory systems of governance for culture</p>			
AREAS OF MONITORING	<p>Cultural and creative sectors</p>	<p>Media diversity</p>	<p>Digital environment</p>	<p>Partnering with civil society</p>
CORE INDICATORS	<p>Policies and measures support the development of dynamic cultural and creative sectors</p>	<p>Policies and measures support diversity of the media</p>	<p>Policies and measures support digital creativity, enterprises and markets</p>	<p>Measures strengthen the skills and capacities of civil society</p>
CORE INDICATORS	<p>Policy-making is informed and involves multiple public bodies</p>	<p>Policies and measures support diversity of content in the media</p>	<p>Policies and measures facilitate access to diverse cultural expressions in the digital environment</p>	<p>Civil society is involved in the implementation of the Convention at national and global levels</p>
ACTIONS	<p><i>Strategic decisions of the governing bodies implemented</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Awareness raised</i> • <i>Information and data collected, analysed and shared</i> • <i>Capacities and skills reinforced</i> 			

<p>Facilitate equitable access, openness and balance in the flow of cultural goods and services as well as the free movement of artists and cultural professionals</p>	<p>Recognize the complementarity of economic and cultural aspects of sustainable development</p>	<p>Respect human rights and fundamental freedoms of expression, information and communication as a pre-requisite for the creation and distribution of diverse cultural expressions</p>
 <p>ACHIEVE A BALANCED FLOW OF CULTURAL GOODS AND SERVICES AND INCREASE THE MOBILITY OF ARTISTS AND CULTURAL PROFESSIONALS</p>	 <p>INTEGRATE CULTURE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS</p>	 <p>PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS</p>
  	 	 

<p>National policies and measures, including preferential treatment, facilitate a balanced flow of cultural goods and services and promote the mobility of artists and cultural professionals around the world</p>	<p>Sustainable development policies and international cooperation programmes integrate culture as a strategic dimension</p>	<p>International and national legislation related to human rights and fundamental freedoms is implemented and promotes gender equality and artistic freedom</p>
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Mobility of artists and cultural professionals	Flow of cultural goods and services	Treaties and agreements	National sustainable development policies and plans	International cooperation for sustainable development	Gender equality	Artistic freedom
<p>Policies and measures support the outward and inward mobility of artists and cultural professionals</p>	<p>Policies and measures support balanced international flows of cultural goods and services</p>	<p>Trade and investment agreements refer to the Convention or implement its objectives</p>	<p>National sustainable development policies and plans include action lines to support diverse cultural expressions</p>	<p>Development cooperation strategies include action lines to support diverse cultural expressions</p>	<p>Policies and measures promote gender equality in the culture and media sectors</p>	<p>Policies and measures promote and protect freedoms of creation and expression and participation in cultural life</p>
<p>Operational programmes support the mobility of artists and cultural professionals, notably from developing countries</p>	<p>Information systems evaluate international flows of cultural goods and services</p>	<p>Other agreements, declarations, recommendations and resolutions refer to the Convention or implement its objectives</p>	<p>Policies and measures support equity in the distribution of cultural resources and inclusive access to such resources</p>	<p>Development cooperation programmes strengthen creative sectors in developing countries</p>	<p>Monitoring systems evaluate levels of representation, participation and access of women in the culture and media sectors</p>	<p>Policies and measures promote and protect the social and economic rights of artists and cultural professionals</p>

Partnerships and networks established, strengthened and fostered • Public debates organized
 Policy analysis, benchmarking and monitoring ensured • Global reports produced
 Technical assistance and policy advice provided • Projects financed



Introduction

We share, we act,
we build

Ernesto Ottone R.

UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture

LOOKING BACK

'Anniversaries are a time for reflection and planning' was the opening line of the inaugural edition of the *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity* report. The timing is especially meaningful for this fourth edition, as it coincides with the 2005 Convention's twentieth anniversary, marking two decades since its adoption by the General Conference on 20 October 2005.

When the *Re|Shaping* report was first published in 2015, it was hailed as 'likely to be a milestone in the advancement of cultural policy research across the world' (UNESCO, 2015), because, until then, no report at the global level had existed to monitor national cultural policies in the field of the diversity of cultural expressions.

UNESCO has been at the forefront of cultural policy development since the 1960s, beginning with its Round-Table Meeting on Cultural Policies in 1967, followed by the publication of the seminal volume *Cultural Policy – a Preliminary Study* (UNESCO, 1969) and a series of reports on national cultural policies prepared by UNESCO Member States through the 1970s and 1980s. Yet, the need for evaluation methods and statistical indicators persisted over the years, particularly as the sector lacked robust monitoring and evaluation systems.

The process of monitoring the Convention's implementation was put in place in 2011, and the first Quadrennial Periodic Reports were submitted in 2012. However, an important barrier to the implementation of the Convention was the lack of baseline data on cultural policies and cultural and creative industries that could inform policy making. In 2014, UNESCO's Internal Oversight Service recommended initiating work towards developing an overall results framework for the Convention, including objectives, indicators and benchmarks (UNESCO, 2014) to capture evolving trends and respond to changing contexts. This recommendation prepared the ground for the birth of the Convention's Monitoring Framework, structured around four goals and 11 areas of monitoring, which have been the backbone of the Convention's knowledge production and sharing for the past decade.

The Monitoring Framework was designed 'to share, not compare' (UNESCO, 2015), and the guiding principles and values underpinning the Convention have shaped its four monitoring goals, which encompass sustainable systems of governance for culture; the balanced flow of cultural goods and services and the mobility of artists and cultural professionals; the integration of culture within sustainable development frameworks; and the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The four monitoring goals are rooted in the Convention's scope and its vision for the cultural ecosystem, guiding data collection to identify emerging trends and challenges that inform cultural policies and initiatives worldwide. Their strength lies in the distinct perspectives they bring to the creative sector, allowing for a nuanced understanding of its current state and what it could become with – or without – appropriate action.

Each edition of the *Re|Shaping* report has introduced its own innovation. This fourth edition breaks new ground by presenting a longitudinal analysis over the years, while also tracking progress and setbacks since its last edition in 2022. Drawing on 133 reports representing 3,908 policies and measures collected between 2021 and 2024, this edition benefits from a data volume increase of 87% compared with the first edition and 115% more than the second, providing a more comprehensive and representative perspective of global cultural policies. While this allows us to measure what has improved or stagnated, persistent 'data deserts' highlight critical gaps in global monitoring.

UNESCO's leadership in global cultural governance

As we marked the twentieth anniversary of the 2005 Convention in 2025, a historic milestone was reached: 100% of reporting countries now have established ministries or agencies dedicated to culture. Furthermore, 92% of Parties now have mechanisms facilitating interministerial cooperation, and the proportion of countries with institutions responsible for collecting cultural statistics has risen to 81%. These milestones, driven by UNESCO's sustained advocacy, confirm the significant progress in establishing strong governance frameworks that provide a foundation for evidence-based and participatory policy making.

In this context, UNESCO's convening of the World Conference on Cultural Policies (MONDIACULT) has been central to strengthening global cultural governance. As a unique multilateral forum for policy dialogue, MONDIACULT has reaffirmed culture as a global public good, integral to human rights and sustainable development, while also advancing the production of up-to-date cultural data at national and international levels. This leadership has culminated in the systematic integration of culture into the highest United Nations policy fora, including the landmark Pact for the Future (2024). However, this institutional progress has not yet been fully reflected in international trade agreements. Among the 269 trade agreements concluded since 2005, only 3% explicitly reference the 2005 Convention.

Structural imbalances and mobility barriers

While we celebrate institutional gains, the cultural sector remains hindered by deep-seated structural imbalances and vulnerabilities. Despite increases in direct government funding for culture in developing countries, the global average remains below 0.6% of gross domestic product. International funding is critically low: in 2022, only 0.15% of Country Programmable Aid went to culture and recreation, and between 2006 and 2022, the cultural and creative industries received only a small share of Aid for Trade.

These constraints are epitomized by a persistent 'visa wall' that restricts the movement of artists from the Global South. While 96% of developed countries support outward mobility, only 38% facilitate inward mobility from developing nations. In parallel, funding constraints are stifling not only government programmes but also civil society initiatives, with 67% of organizations reporting direct impacts from funding cuts – particularly organizations supporting human rights, democracy, gender equality and inclusive participation.

Finally, the near collapse in foreign direct investment stock in developing countries after 2020 further highlights a growing investment gap. Combined with ongoing resource shortages and limited institutional capacity, this gap continues to limit many countries' ability to fully protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions.

Rights, equality and protection gaps

Culture is fundamental to social equity, inclusion and cohesion. It underpins human rights and freedoms, and is essential for building just, peaceful and sustainable societies. To this end, countries are urged to strengthen cultural policies and institutions so that culture reaches all communities and addresses structural inequalities.

Within this framework, progress on gender equality, a priority for UNESCO, remains uneven. While women's leadership in national arts and cultural institutions has risen globally from 31% in 2017 to 46% in 2024, wide disparities remain between developing countries (30%) and developed countries (64%). The share of countries with ministries or government bodies addressing gender equality for artists and cultural professionals has declined slightly from 72% to 69%, with the sharpest declines in developing countries.

Furthermore, formal recognition of rights does not always translate into effective protection. Although over 90% of Parties now report legal guarantees for artistic expression, violations are rising – including the use of

strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) to intimidate and silence artists by exhausting them financially and psychologically. These legal pressures, alongside a 7 percentage point decline in independent monitoring bodies in certain regions, contribute to self-censorship and a pervasive chilling effect. Continued strategic action is therefore required to advance equality in the sector and ensure that artistic freedom moves from mere legal recognition to enforceable practice.

The digital environment and AI governance

The digital environment, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), is reshaping cultural creation, production, distribution and access. While 85% of Parties now implement digital cultural strategies, a 'regulatory vacuum' persists regarding Generative AI. Only 48% of Parties report measures to develop statistics or studies on access to digital media, and out of 148 bills on AI passed globally, only one identifies culture as its primary subject matter.

At the same time, the economic and professional impacts on creators are increasingly evident. While digital-source revenues now account for 35% of creators' income, an overwhelming 79% of cultural professionals perceive AI as a threat to their livelihoods, citing the unlicensed use of copyrighted data and the potential devaluation of human creativity.

Yet, digital tools and AI offer significant opportunities – to democratize access to cultural experiences, revitalize heritage and foster innovative cultural expressions. Realizing these benefits requires targeted investment in digital and AI literacy for cultural professionals, enabling creators to engage with these technologies ethically while maintaining cultural integrity. Unequal access risks deepening global disparities, highlighting the importance of UNESCO's multilateral, cross-sectoral governance approach. In this regard, the UNESCO 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of AI provides a framework for aligning algorithmic governance with human rights and cultural sovereignty, while protecting cultural diversity from content homogenization.

Bridging the action gap

Trade in cultural goods has nearly doubled since 2005, reaching US\$254.28 billion in 2023. Developing countries have recorded an average growth rate of 8.5% for cultural goods and now account for 20% of global trade in cultural services. However, this progress is threatened by an over 95% contraction in the annual growth rate of foreign direct investment stock among developing countries.

At policy level, a disconnect exists between formal recognition of the cultural and creative industries in National Development Plans or National Sustainable Development Plans and concrete engagement. While 93% of Parties involve cultural bodies in national planning, only 25% of reported measures integrating culture into sustainable development frameworks have been evaluated, limiting accountability and opportunities for learning. Furthermore, expectations regarding culture's contribution to environmental outcomes have fallen to 11%.

To address this action gap, UNESCO is spearheading global action through the Group of Friends of Culture-Based Climate Action at COPs 28, 29 and 30, mainstreaming culture as an indispensable tool for societal transformation and climate resilience.

LOOKING FORWARD: THE POST-2030 AGENDA

As the twentieth anniversary of the 2005 Convention is marked, we stand at a strategic turning point. The global creative landscape has been fundamentally transformed, and the pace of change will only accelerate. This report invites policy makers and civil society to move beyond symbolic recognition and fully integrate culture as a driver of sustainable development, economic growth, peace and social cohesion, and to embed culture as a global public good within the post-2030 framework.

Protecting the diversity of cultural expressions is a shared responsibility – one that requires reinforcing interministerial cooperation, mobilizing resources for equitable cultural participation and bridging structural barriers to ensure creative voices thrive, for present and future generations. UNESCO reaffirms its unwavering commitment to strengthening the creative ecosystem, harnessing culture for inclusive development and safeguarding the diversity that makes our world resilient.

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Goal 1

SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE
SYSTEMS OF GOVERNANCE
FOR CULTURE



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Goal 2

ACHIEVE A BALANCED FLOW OF
CULTURAL GOODS AND SERVICES AND
INCREASE THE MOBILITY OF ARTISTS
AND CULTURAL PROFESSIONALS



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Goal 3

INTEGRATE CULTURE IN
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORKS



© Shimji Turner Yamamoto, *Global Tree Project: HANGING GARDEN*, 2010. Dead and live white birches, Dedicorated 19th-century Holy Cross Church (National Register of Historic Places), Cincinnati, OH, USA*

Goal 4

PROMOTE
HUMAN RIGHTS AND
FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS



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Chapter 1

Building on strong foundations

Andy C. Pratt

KEY FINDINGS

- Cultural governance has strengthened significantly. By 2024, all Parties reported having a ministry or agency with responsibility and funding for culture, signalling growing acknowledgement of the need for robust institutional frameworks to support the cultural and creative sector.
- Decentralization trends are reinforcing this progress. Responsibilities for promoting the cultural and creative sectors expanded from 79% to 90% of Parties, and 92% now report having regulatory frameworks that foster interministerial cooperation. These developments indicate a broad commitment to strengthening cultural governance at multiple levels.
- Education and economic ministries are the main partners in interministerial cooperation. Education agencies now account for 28.1% of partnerships (up from 19%), and trade, economy, business and finance ministries account for 25%, reflecting a focus on leveraging the economic contributions of the cultural and creative sector. Still, a major gap remains between policy recognition and implementation in the area of innovation: although 77% of reporting countries acknowledge 'creativity and innovation' in their national sustainable development plans, only 3% of interministerial cooperation measures involve innovation-focused agencies. This disparity indicates challenges in aligning the sector's creative potential with policy frameworks that tend to prioritize technological innovation.
- Developing countries are narrowing the public funding gap, but the global average remains below 0.6% of GDP, reflecting a continuous decline in direct funding for culture globally. Developing countries have increased government spending on culture since 2018, while spending in developed countries has generally flatlined or declined since 2014. Despite this convergence, developed countries still allocate more than twice the share of their GDP to the cultural and creative sector compared to developing countries.
- Indirect public expenditures – such as tax deductions – are becoming a major policy tool for supporting the cultural and creative sector, particularly in the audio-visual sector. While direct public expenditures produce cultural goods with distinct social and cultural value, tax incentives work by reducing financial barriers for private sector investment. Yet, the impact of fiscal incentives policies is rarely examined beyond a narrow economic perspective, raising critical questions about their purpose, effectiveness and influence on the diversity of cultural expressions.
- Comprehensive and reliable data are essential for effective cultural policy making, as they enable assessment of policy results and foster evidence-based governance. The share of Parties with institutions for collecting cultural statistics has risen from 62% to 81%, and those with statistical offices or research bodies evaluating cultural policies has increased from 46% to 61%. However, their development lags behind most other areas of public policy (such as health, education and transport), and Parties frequently report challenges such as limited statistical reporting, expertise and resources for interministerial coordination.
- Cultural policy is increasingly oriented towards employment. Today 85% of Parties report job creation measures, up from 68% in the last reporting cycle. The most frequently reported measures, each cited by 29% of Parties, are integrating cultural employment into broader cultural policy strategies or national development plans and improving access to finance.
- Concerns are growing about formalizing cultural and creative sector activities within broader economy and governance frameworks. This reflects the persistent precarity of work in the sector – characterized by high levels of non-standard employment – including self-employment, part-time, secondary and intermittent work – and limited access to social benefits such as pensions, childcare and sick leave.
- Labour market data indicate that selfemployment in the cultural and creative sectors can be significantly higher than economy-wide averages. While these arrangements offer flexibility, Parties note that they also create structural vulnerabilities that underscore the need for stronger formalization measures.
- Intellectual Property and copyright are critical to building resilient cultural and creative industries, yet many regions still show low respect for copyright and lack effective collective management organizations (CMOs) to collect and redistribute earnings from creative work. Coverage beyond the music sector remains particularly weak: while CMOs for music operate in just over two-thirds of Parties, only 23-24% of developing countries have CMOs covering audio-visual, literary, visual arts, photography or graphic design fields.
- Education and training in the cultural and creative sector are shifting rapidly in response to technological change and evolving labour market needs. While 83% of Parties still offer university-level programmes, as in the last reporting cycle, coverage has declined across several domains – including media arts, music, performing arts and visual arts, each domain scoring between 71% and 78%. Publishing is now the least supported at 60% in tertiary and 63% in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes, followed by cultural management at 65%. This indicates a continuing education gap. In contrast, TVET programmes have expanded sharply, from 76% to 93%, addressing shortages in technical and craft skills. Cinema, audio-visual arts and design show strong growth across both tertiary and TVET offerings, reversing previous trends. Digital literacy programmes for creation and experimentation have also surged, from 49% to 63%, reflecting rapid adaptation to technological change.
- Capacity building, funding, and artist development programmes remain among the most popular measures, reported by 31.7% of Parties. Developing countries (85%) implement capacity-building initiatives more often than developed countries (79%) to help artists monetize their work, reflecting the need for more solid institutional frameworks for training and capacity building.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT

Robust institutional frameworks for cultural governance are crucial for:



Funding for culture



Accessible public cultural services



Effective cultural policies



Interministerial cooperation



Monitoring and collecting cultural statistics

PROGRESS

100% of reporting countries indicate having a **ministry/agency** with competence and funding for culture

92% of countries have regulatory frameworks supporting **interministerial cooperation**



62% → 81%

The share of countries with institutions collecting **cultural statistics** is rising

Increased measures addressing **technical workforce and skills gaps**, with cultural TVET programmes in **93%** of countries

CHALLENGES

Less than **0.6%** of **GDP** is dedicated to direct funding for culture globally



Cultural statistics development lags behind other areas of public policy (health, education, transport)

Precarity of work in the creative sector remains persistent



Intellectual Property and copyright frameworks remain weak, with **collective management organizations** limited in developing countries



University-level programmes have declined, especially in publishing and cultural management

EMERGING TRENDS



Indirect public expenditures are increasingly used as policy tools; however, their impact on cultural expressions **needs to be assessed**



Ministries of education and economy are emerging as main partners for **interministerial cooperation**



Cultural policy is increasingly oriented towards **employment**, with **85%** of countries reporting **job creation** measures



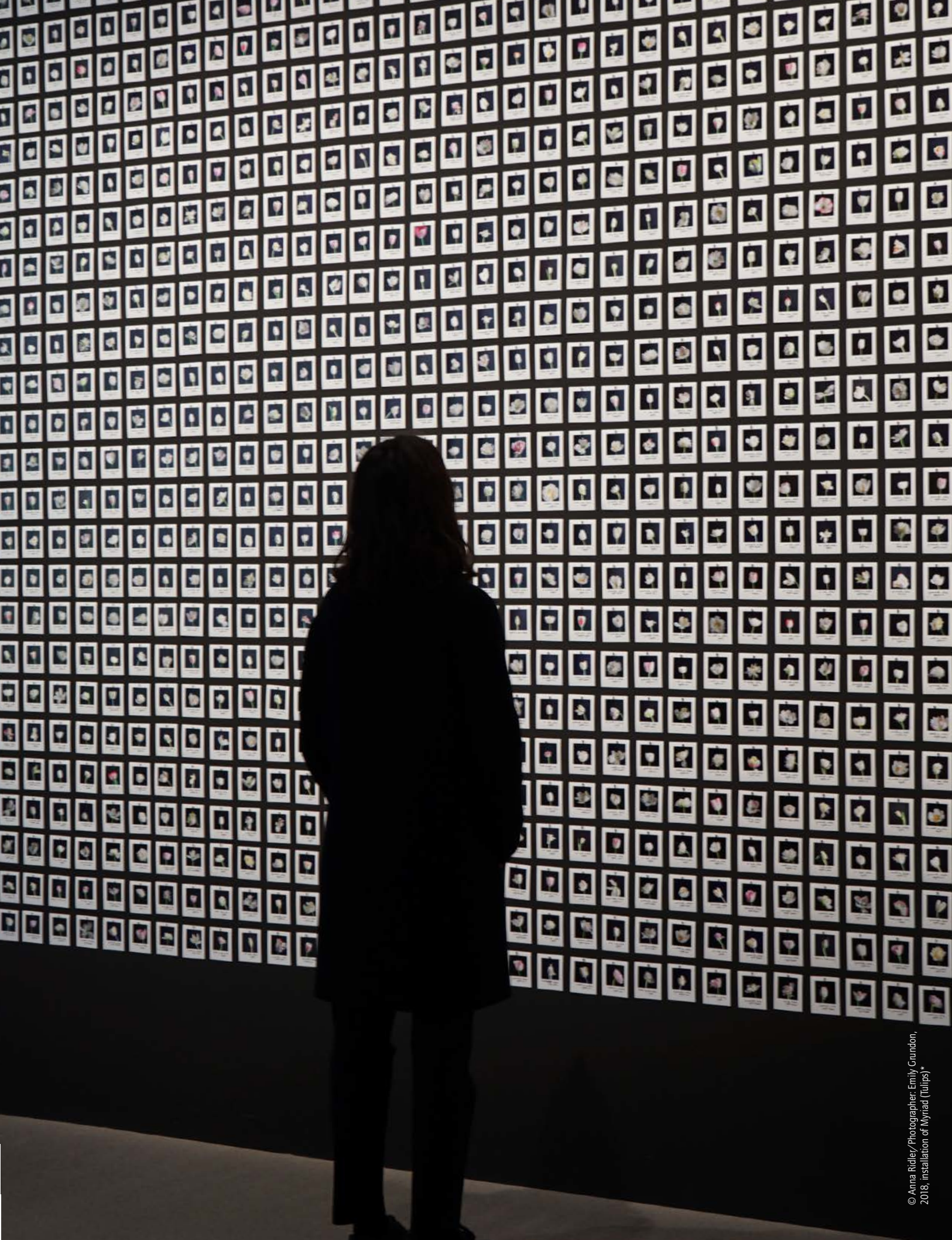
49% → 63%
More countries report **digital creation and experimentation literacy** programmes, reflecting adaptation to technological change

For Parties to the Convention

- Develop robust regulatory frameworks that enable interministerial cooperation in areas that directly involve the cultural and creative sector or affect culture professionals and access to culture. Collaboration should include ministries or agencies responsible for culture, education, foreign affairs, labour, trade, economy and business, finance, and related domains, aligning with growing interministerial cooperation trends.
- Substantially increase direct public funding for culture, to reverse the global decline in investment and reduce the gap between developing and developed countries, especially as developing countries are beginning to increase their cultural expenditure while levels in developed countries have stagnated or declined.
- Carefully assess the purpose and impact of indirect public expenditure through fiscal incentives to ensure that these incentives support, rather than undermine, the diversity of cultural expressions.
- Invest in information systems and institutional capacities in national statistical offices and cultural ministries to ensure continuous collection and analysis of cultural statistics for evidence-based cultural policy making, and to address recurrent challenges such as limited statistical expertise, reporting and resources.
- Support the formalization of cultural and creative sector activities to integrate them into the formal economy, governance frameworks, and mainstream economic development and innovation funding.
- Address the persistent precarity of work in the cultural and creative sector through policies targeting non-standard forms of employment and limited access to social benefits. Support initiatives that promote sustainable livelihoods for independent cultural workers, including those who are self-employed or engage in intermittent work.
- Establish and ensure the effective functioning of collective management organizations (CMOs) across creative domains, and promote public respect for Intellectual Property and copyright through coordinated legislation, capacity building, and public awareness measures. Digitization offers opportunities to improve CMO efficiency, particularly in certain domains and regions where coverage is limited or fragmented.
- Monitor and reassess education and training opportunities in the cultural and creative sector, as declining numbers of university-level programmes risk impoverishing the diversity of cultural expressions, widening training gaps, and weakening local, national and regional cultural production. Integrate culture and arts education in both cultural and educational policies, aligned with the UNESCO Framework for Culture and Arts Education, and respond to shifts in tertiary and TVET offerings and rising demand for digital literacy.
- Give greater recognition to STEAM education approaches (science, technology, engineering, arts and maths), as arts and science-based education complement each other and strengthen social, cultural and economic development.
- Expand digital education programmes to meet the needs of a digitalization-driven creative workforce, particularly in the context of Generative AI, and ensure that specialized arts schools provide foundational digital skills.

For UNESCO

- Continue supporting Parties in developing, monitoring and evaluating cultural policies that respond to current needs and rapid sectoral transformations, including by facilitating integration with education, labour, trade, innovation and other relevant policy areas.
- Continue assisting Parties in establishing effective cultural information systems that align with the Convention's Monitoring Framework and the updated UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics, as reliable data and statistical capacity remain uneven across Parties.
- Build capacity in developing countries to support artists to monetize their work, compensating for weaker institutional infrastructure including limited coverage and effectiveness of CMOs beyond the music sector.
- Seize the opportunity of the Convention's 20th anniversary and the 2027 global reporting deadline to reinforce monitoring mechanisms and enhance knowledge products and tools, to better inform policy making from local to international levels and improve Parties' reporting capacities.
- Strengthen inter-agency relations by supporting sustainable cultural exchanges, co-creation processes and cooperation between actors across regions. Build on the growing integration of culture into multilateral frameworks at regional and international levels.



Chapter 2

Reconfiguring media diversity

Audrey Yue

KEY FINDINGS

- As framed by the 2005 Convention, media diversity refers both to the availability of varied cultural content and to the presence of public, private and community-based media that reflect a plurality of cultural expressions and perspectives. It requires a media landscape with diverse types of media ownership and outlets, as well as the inclusion and representation of different social, cultural and linguistic groups in media content.
 - Growing concentration of media ownership, the decline of independent and local outlets, and the homogenization of content are undermining diversity in the media ecosystem. These trends also weaken public trust in media institutions.
 - Media freedom is in global decline. The number of countries scoring zero on media freedom has tripled since 2005. This decline is fuelled by economic instability, concentrated media ownership and the growing influence of dominant digital media conglomerates – all pressures that erode editorial independence and limit media diversity. This decline was exacerbated by a 38% increase in journalist killings in 2022 and 2023 compared to the previous two years.
 - The number of UNESCO Member States with right to information laws has grown significantly, reaching 139 in 2025. However, this positive momentum is counterbalanced in some countries by developments that weaken responsible bodies for oversight and accountability.
 - After 30 years of media monitoring, women make up only 26% of news subjects and sources. This figure has plateaued since 2010, showing stalled progress towards gender parity.
 - The consolidation of digital platforms and media outlets risks reducing the range of available content and distribution channels. It also may further marginalize independent and minority voices, while favouring commercially driven content.
 - Local media is foundational for civic engagement, social cohesion and democratic accountability. It provides space for diverse viewpoints and independent cultural expression. While digital platforms and social media are widely used to access information and content, they should not entirely replace the institutional role of traditional outlets, which are, however, weakening due to growing economic pressures and media consolidation. In response, Parties have adopted regulatory and financial mechanisms, including targeted funding, to sustain the operations of diverse media outlets.
 - Support for public service media and cultural diversity is growing, particularly in developing countries. The share of developing countries with public service media mandated to promote cultural diversity rose from 84% in 2017-2020 to 99% in 2021-2024, reflecting a growing commitment to pluralistic media systems.
- Many Parties have introduced funding and legal measures to strengthen local, Indigenous and minority-language media and improve representation of vulnerable groups.
- Investment in the digital transition of public service and community media is growing. Countries increasingly support the shift from analogue to digital broadcasting, the development of online platforms for regional content, and training for media professionals in new technologies and digital media.
 - Regulatory reforms and collective efforts, especially with civil society, have strengthened frameworks for media ownership and oversight, supporting media independence and plurality.
 - While overall monitoring of the media has increased, coverage remains uneven across different areas of oversight. According to Quadrennial Periodic Report data, 72% of Parties have regulatory authorities monitoring diversity in media ownership, but only 50% monitor gender equality in the media and 57% monitor editorial independence.
 - Monitoring media content in the digital environment has become a global priority. The share of Parties with mechanisms to monitor online media rose from 54% in 2017-2020 to 76% in 2021-2024, reflecting greater awareness of the risks associated with digital media.
 - Media accountability models are evolving in the digital environment. New regulations are emerging to improve transparency around how digital platforms mediate access and recommend content. As media systems become more digital, traditional accountability instruments (press councils, codes of ethics) are facing challenges in adapting.
 - Developing countries are more likely to require content diversity in regional and local broadcasting (90% compared to 84% in developed countries), which requires producing localized content for multiple linguistic and cultural communities. By contrast, linguistic diversity in media programming is higher in developed countries (89% compared to 83% in developing countries), with stronger policy frameworks that require multilingual broadcasting.
 - Domestic content regulations for audio-visual media are expanding globally. The share of Parties with domestic content quotas rose from 68% in 2017-2020 to 80% in 2021-2024, reflecting growing efforts to safeguard cultural and linguistic diversity. However, significant differences remain between developed and developing countries.
 - Only 24% of Parties have content quotas for subscription video-on-demand services, compared to 47% for free-to-air television. The gap is especially prominent in developing nations, where only 5% have subscription video-on-demand regulations, compared with 62% of developed nations.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT

A diverse media landscape encompasses:



Diverse content representing different social, cultural and linguistic groups



Plurality of media outlets and ownership models (public, private and community media)



Freedom to operate without government control or censorship

PROGRESS

84% → 99%

Developing countries report having **public service media** mandated to **promote cultural diversity**

68% → 80%

Countries report **domestic content quotas** for audio-visual media, signalling increased support for local media ecosystems



Countries are implementing regulatory and financial measures to:

- Ensure the sustainability of **local, Indigenous and minority-language media outlets**
- Provide **training** for local media professionals, including from vulnerable groups
- Strengthen **media accountability** and compliance with service obligations for diverse **socio-cultural programming**

CHALLENGES

Digital media consolidation

is contributing to:

- Erosion of **media pluralism**
- Algorithmic-driven **echo chambers** and **reduced content discoverability**
- **Misinformation** and weaker editorial safeguards

Only 26% of news subjects and sources are **women** – momentum towards gender parity has stalled



Only 24% of countries have domestic content quotas for **subscription video-on-demand services**

Monitoring of media remains unbalanced across areas of oversight – only **50%** of countries monitor gender equality and **57%** editorial independence

EMERGING TRENDS

Media diversity in the digital environment

is a growing focus of policy making

54% → 76% Countries have **mechanisms monitoring media content** in the digital environment

- Investments are increasing in the **digital transition** of public service and community media
- New regulations are emerging to improve **transparency of content recommendation systems**



Approaches to **content diversity in programming** vary globally

- Developing countries report more mandates for **regional and/or local broadcasters**
- Developed countries often report mandates on **linguistic diversity**

To support the diversity of the media

- **Regulate media concentration and platform dominance:** Governments, regional regulatory authorities and competition bodies should adopt and enforce media ownership laws to ensure fair competition and prevent monopolies and excessive consolidation. This involves overseeing media mergers and implementing financial and institutional tools to diversify media ownership and ensure the sustainability of diverse media outlets.
- **Enhance media ownership transparency:** National regulatory authorities, parliaments and watchdog bodies should require public disclosure of media ownership structures and funding sources to ensure democratic accountability, safeguard editorial independence and enable citizens to evaluate the sources of the information and cultural content they consume.
- **Invest in community and public service media:** National governments, cultural ministries and development donors should provide stable financial and institutional support for public service and community media. Support should expand access, promote cultural diversity and ensure inclusive participation of rural, Indigenous and vulnerable communities.
- **Expand and harmonize media monitoring systems:** National media regulators and relevant international organizations should 1) strengthen the legal mandates and resources of media monitoring bodies to track pluralism, ownership, independence and gender equality across traditional and digital media; and 2) facilitate regional and international cooperation through shared data and good practices, such as the Media Pluralism Monitor or UNESCO's quadrennial *World Trends in Freedom of Expression and Media Development* report series.
- **Strengthen context-appropriate media accountability mechanisms:** Develop regulatory frameworks that strengthen media accountability mechanisms and ethical standards. Build the capacity of relevant actors to monitor compliance, protect editorial independence and public-interest obligations, promote content diversity, and address mis- and disinformation and other digital harms.
- **Ensure algorithmic transparency and AI accountability:** Governments, platform operators and international digital governance bodies should 1) require platforms to disclose their content moderation and curation algorithms, and to conduct risk assessments of AI systems that influence public discourse; and 2) encourage co-regulatory approaches involving civil society and academia, in line with UNESCO's updated Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms and Generative Artificial Intelligence.
- **Strengthen collaboration with civil society:** Empower civil society organizations to advocate for media pluralism, monitor ownership concentration and promote media literacy, strengthening public resilience against mis- and disinformation.

To support the diversity of cultural content in the media

- **Implement domestic cultural content quotas and discoverability requirements:** National governments and audio-visual regulatory agencies should adopt and enforce content quotas, incentives and discoverability requirements for national, regional and linguistic content, especially on streaming and subscription platforms, to preserve cultural sovereignty and support local cultural and creative industries.
- **Ensure diversity in cultural media content and production:** Governments should address representation gaps within national and local media systems, by adopting policies that promote media production and content with diversity across age, gender and socio-cultural groups.
- **Promote inclusive and localized programming:** Public broadcasters, community media networks and cultural councils should develop editorial guidelines and funding schemes, which support programming that reflects linguistic and cultural diversity, gender equality and under-represented voices. Efforts should also prioritize independent productions from non-urban regions and minority communities.
- **Strengthen capacity for independent content creation:** Development agencies, international donors and national training institutes should fund initiatives that train content creators from Indigenous, youth and minority communities in media production and digital storytelling, and promote their visibility.
- **Strengthen data collection on cultural content diversity:** National statistics agencies and regulatory bodies should build technical capacity to collect and disaggregate data on cultural media content diversity, including by region, language, gender and age, to inform evidence-based policy adjustments and meet the 2005 Convention's monitoring requirements.



Chapter 3

The digital environment: online culture, offline implications

Heritiana Ranaivoson

KEY FINDINGS

- Digital transformation in public institutions is a prerequisite for the broader digital transition of the cultural and creative sector. Public institutions' growing adoption of digital cultural strategies responds to both evolving sector and stakeholder needs and the transformative effects of digitization on the creative value chain.
- Digital cultural governance has become a central pillar of cultural policy making. Between 2021 and 2024, 85% of Parties developed policies to promote the digital transformation of the cultural and creative sector, up from 80% in 2017-2020. Progress is also evident in Parties' efforts to support vibrant domestic digital cultural and creative markets (64%) and to enhance the discoverability of domestic cultural content (80%), representing a 20 percentage point increase in both areas since the last reporting period. However, in 2025, the Conference of Parties to the 2005 Convention noted that existing regulatory frameworks are inadequate to address challenges posed by Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI).
- The global digital marketplace is characterized by a small number of major platforms that dominate the digital ecosystem; this raises concerns about market imbalance and its implications for creativity and diversity. In this environment, a limited group of highly visible artists captures a disproportionate share of revenues and exposure, while many lesser-known creators struggle to achieve comparable visibility.
- Access to digital cultural content is increasingly provided through private services such as music and video-streaming platforms, whose non-transparent content-curation practices are often driven by commercial priorities. These platforms tend to prioritize mainstream content, limiting the discoverability of less-known works and increasing the risk of cultural homogenization.
- Against this backdrop, Parties are adopting targeted measures to support local creatives in the digital environment and promote the diversity of cultural expressions. Parties are implementing practical initiatives such as trade fairs, financial mechanisms, incubators for creative startups, and obligations requiring global streaming platforms to invest in the production of local audio-visual content.
- Revenues from digital services now represent the main source of income for creators, up from 17% in 2018 to 35% in 2023. At the same time, digitization has intensified income instability and exposure to Intellectual Property infringements for many artists. Policy responses aimed at ensuring fair remuneration in the digital environment remain limited.
- Inequalities persist in access to digital technologies, infrastructures and skills. Digital literacy gaps are particularly pronounced: 45% of the population in developed countries possesses intermediate digital skills, compared to only 16% in developing countries. Similarly, 67% of individuals in developed countries have basic information and communications technologies skills, versus 28% in developing contexts. Gender disparities also persist, with women receiving lower pay and occupying fewer senior positions in many professions across the digital cultural sector.
- Gaps in data regarding access to and consumption of digital media cultural content remain a global challenge. Only 48% of Parties report measures to develop statistics or studies in this area. Data collection is constrained by methodological difficulties, the reluctance of major streaming platforms to share user data, and the limited transparency in AI systems, all of which affect the online discoverability and visibility of creative works.
- The rapid rise of AI, particularly GenAI, is reshaping various cultural and creative sectors. Creative professionals report overwhelmingly negative perceptions of its impact, with 79% viewing AI as a threat to art workers. Economic projections forecast substantial risks for creators, estimating global revenue losses of 24% for music creators (around 4 billion euros per year by 2028) and 21% for audio-visual creators (approximately 4.5 billion euros annually). Additional concerns include the technology's capacity to replace human work, the unlicensed use of copyrighted data to train GenAI systems, and potential losses in cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Despite growing policy attention to AI, its implications for the cultural and creative sectors remain insufficiently addressed. Between 2016 and 2023, 148 AI-related bills were adopted across 128 countries, yet only one identified culture as its primary subject matter.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT



Digital transformation of cultural and creative sectors



Global concentration among online platforms



New forms of remuneration and skills requirements for creators



Unequal access to digital technologies



Rapid adoption of AI technologies

PROGRESS

85% of countries support **digital transformation** of the cultural sector through:

- Digitizing public services and functions
- Interministerial collaboration
- National digital cultural strategies and plans
- Targeted sector-specific support (e.g. gaming)



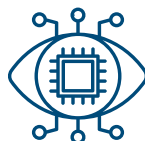
Countries support **local digital creative sectors** through:

- Trade shows and networking events
- Incubators and financing mechanisms for entrepreneurship
- Investments in local content production
- Digital skills development

CHALLENGES

Digital divides persist

- Only **16%** of people in developing countries have **intermediate ICT skills**
- **Women creators** are concentrated in **lower-income brackets**
- A small number of platforms dominate with **non-transparent content curation practices**, limiting discoverability
- Only **48%** of countries are **developing statistics** on consumption of digital media cultural content



Digitization has increased **precarity for creators**

- Unstable employment
- Intellectual Property infringement
- Challenges for fair remuneration

Culture remains a **blind spot** in **AI governance**

- Only **1 in 148** AI bills focuses on culture
- Legal disputes over **copyright and transparency**

EMERGING TRENDS

Digital priorities shaping countries' cultural policy

- **64%** support **vibrant domestic cultural markets**
- **80%** enhance **discoverability of domestic cultural content**
- **85%** support **digital skills development** as **35%** of creators' revenues come from digital services



Opportunities and challenges presented by AI

- A **powerful tool** to enhance creative production, experimentation and access
- But poses **threats** to cultural and linguistic diversity and creators' rights and livelihoods
- Preliminary projections for global revenue loss by 2028: **24%** for **music creators** and **21%** for **audio-visual creators**

For Parties to the Convention

- Establish and enforce clear governance frameworks for digital culture and AI. These should support ethical, inclusive and sustainable development in cultural and creative sectors, including technologies used for creation and distribution, while protecting creators' Intellectual Property rights. Public bodies responsible for cultural policy should also have an explicit role in supporting digital innovation, building digital skills and literacy, and investing in digital cultural infrastructure.
- Make the diversity of cultural expressions a core consideration in AI legislation, regulations, and policies at national and regional levels. This should be done in line with international frameworks, including the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, the recommendations of the UNESCO Reflection Group on the diversity of cultural expressions in the digital environment and the MONDIACULT 2025 Conference Outcome Document.
- Increase transparency around AI systems' use and development. This includes clear disclosure of training data, in line with open data principles, and clear identification of AI-generated outputs. Parties should also put in place safeguards to ensure fair compensation for creators, require informed consent for the use of works, voice and likeness, and give creators control over how these are used, adapted or reproduced by AI systems, including for training purposes.
- Strengthen collaboration between ministries responsible for culture and digital policies, by establishing sustained mechanisms for joint planning, data sharing and capacity building.
- Develop practical strategies and action plans that respond to how digitization affects creative value chains and the needs of artists, cultural professionals and organizations. These should identify the policy, funding and capacity-building measures needed to support digital transformation and improve the discoverability of diverse cultural content.
- Foster strategic public-private partnerships to strengthen local digital creative ecosystems. These partnerships should support skills development, creation, financing, production and visibility for local creators by providing grants, fiscal incentives, trade fairs and incubator programmes, while also incentivizing global streaming platforms to invest in local content.
- Strengthen digital and AI skills across the cultural sector. Develop national capacity-building plans to improve digital literacy and AI skills among artists and cultural professionals, working with local private actors and civil society through open and inclusive consultations. Update arts education curricula and methodologies to reflect new technologies, including AI. Promote cultural education initiatives that help the public understand digital tools and culturally responsible practices.
- Close digital gaps in access and participation. Partner with local cultural associations and education institutions to ensure equitable access to digital infrastructure, creative tools and training. These efforts should include vulnerable and under-represented groups, including people with disabilities, Indigenous communities and those living in remote or rural areas, so that they can enjoy digital cultural content and participate actively as creators and producers within the digital creative economy.
- Raise awareness of the impacts of digital technologies on the cultural and creative sector. Promote discussion of ethical and fair use of AI, particularly in regional and international fora, and strengthen dialogue with technology companies, civil society and other private actors to identify shared solutions and concrete actions.
- Improve data collection on the cultural and creative sectors in the digital environment. Work with international organizations, researchers, the private sector and civil society to strengthen the systematic collection and sharing of data, particularly on AI use and impacts across the creative value chain, including in terms of gender-disaggregated data. Monitor domestic digital markets, the diversity of actors and access to local content to complement international data collection efforts.

For civil society and the private sector

- Advocate for stronger digital and AI governance and regulation for the cultural and creative sector at national and global levels. This includes transparency requirements for AI systems, such as disclosure of input data and labelling of AI-generated outputs, to better protect creators' rights.
- Raise awareness of how AI affects cultural diversity and creative work. Engage cultural and creative professionals, organizations and the broader public, and promote ethical and culturally responsible practices in the digital environment, including transparency and fair use of creators' works.
- Advocate for better data collection on digital culture. Contribute to data collection efforts in partnership with public authorities and regional or international organizations.
- Strengthen international cooperation and exchange. Support networking, share experiences and encourage good practices through policy and legislation related to the digitization of cultural content. Promote collaborative frameworks that facilitate visibility and access to diverse cultural expressions.
- Support local creators in digital markets. Encourage global platforms to invest in original local content and to license national catalogues, improving visibility for domestic creators and fostering diversity in digital cultural markets.

For UNESCO

- Reinforce UNESCO's action on AI and culture. This could include setting up a global network of experts in digital culture and AI, supporting the creation of UNESCO Chairs on digital culture and promoting research and capacity building, particularly in developing countries. Consider developing guidance and ethical frameworks for the use of AI in cultural and creative sectors, with a focus on transparency, inclusion and the protection of creators' rights.
- Revise the 2005 Convention's framework for Quadrennial Periodic Reports to improve the collection and sharing of information on policies and measures related to online discoverability and linguistic diversity. This should include clear indicators regarding AI, such as the use of AI by artists and measures to support fair remuneration.
- Reinforce cooperation with international partners. Work closely with organizations such as the World Intellectual Property Organization and the International Labour Organization on joint advocacy and knowledge sharing to better protect Intellectual Property and fair working conditions for creators in the digital environment. Expand partnerships to include research institutions, civil society and private sector stakeholders for joint initiatives on AI transparency, ethical practices and capacity building.



Chapter 4

Civil society, voices for culture and action

Ayeta Anne Wangusa

KEY FINDINGS

- While 91% of Parties report having elaborated policies promoting the diversity of cultural expressions in consultation with civil society, only 74% include examples of civil society measures in their Quadrennial Periodic Reports. This suggests a gap between consultation and meaningful inclusion. Nevertheless, developing countries have made notable advances towards parity with developed countries, particularly in policy dialogue and policy design.
- The percentage of Parties submitting a Civil Society Organizations Form has dropped, especially in developed countries (a decrease of 14 percentage points, from 73% to 59%). Combined with the fact that measures from civil society account for only 20% of the total reported, this trend suggests a potential weakening of participatory monitoring mechanisms at the national level.
- Civil society organizations continue to play a key role in protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions by engaging in shared governance, filling gaps that are not fully addressed by public functions and acting as mediators for marginalized groups, especially youth, women, ethnic minorities and Indigenous communities.
- Civil society organizations' priorities when implementing the Convention vary globally. In developing countries, these organizations primarily emphasize culture's role in sustainable development (69% of measures reported) and cultural mobility (68%). In contrast, organizations in developed countries place greater emphasis on human rights and fundamental freedoms (41%).
- The formalization of cultural associations and professional organizations accelerated during the 2021-2024 reporting period, becoming nearly universal in cultural domains such as visual arts (96%) and music (94%) but lagging in media arts (76%). However, the existence of professional organizations and trade unions does not necessarily imply that these bodies are operating at full capacity to deliver concrete benefits for their creative communities.
- The share of Parties reporting capacity-building opportunities for civil society organizations increased by 15 percentage points (from 71% to 86%) across all regions, but growing reliance on national and international networking between organizations suggests efforts to build resilience in the face of emerging challenges. Significant barriers, particularly related to funding and visa restrictions, continue to hinder international collaboration.
- Although reported public funding schemes for civil society organizations increased globally by 11 percentage points since the previous reporting period, these mechanisms are increasingly inadequate to meet civil society's needs. This shortfall is compounded by a global decline in cultural funding and a shift towards short-term, project-based financing. Recent funding cuts at the global level are already impacting civil society programmes, with initiatives related to human rights, democracy and gender equality the most affected.
- Civil society organizations often face legal barriers to accessing public benefits. In some countries, their activities are not legally recognized as serving the public interest, limiting their eligibility for public funding, tax relief and related support measures.
- While international financing mechanisms, such as the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, are trying to fill these gaps, they are also encountering difficulties in terms of financial sustainability.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT

Civil society plays a crucial role in:



Cultural policy making and filling policy gaps



Monitoring public initiatives



Fostering transparency and public trust



Ensuring equitable participation in cultural life



Acting as mediators for vulnerable groups

PROGRESS

Formalization of professional organizations accelerated, representing artists and cultural professionals in:

96% of countries for visual arts

94% of countries for music

However, progress is lagging in **media arts (76%** of countries)



71% → 86%

Countries reported increasing **capacity-building support** for civil society

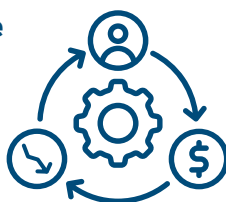


Developing countries are involving civil society more in **policy dialogue and design**

CHALLENGES

Public funding schemes are inadequate to meet civil society's needs

- Major disruptions to global funding are endangering work on human rights, democracy, gender equality
- Short-term and one-off project-based funding models are **hindering sustainability and continuity**
- **Legislative barriers** to civil society accessing public benefits and funding from abroad
- **International funding mechanisms** are struggling with financial sustainability



Participatory monitoring mechanisms are weakening

Proportion of developed countries submitting a **Civil Society Organizations Form** decreased (73% → 59%)

Barriers to international networking

- **Funding models** do not allow civil society to devote time and capacity to networking
- **Restrictive visa policies** in developed countries prevent peer learning

EMERGING TRENDS

Priorities vary in **implementing the Convention**



- **Developing countries** focus on sustainable development and cultural mobility
- **Developed countries** focus on human rights and fundamental freedoms

In the face of emerging challenges and in efforts to **build resilience**, there is growing reliance on **national and international networking**



For Parties to the Convention

- Provide a strong enabling environment for civil society organizations' crucial role to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions. Implement supportive legislation, adequate capacity-building programmes and sustainable funding opportunities.
- Establish or reinforce structured dialogue mechanisms with civil society organizations to ensure they foster transparent and participatory policy making. Support civil society's direct engagement in the design and implementation of cultural policies.
- Review and mitigate restrictive visa policies and other mobility barriers that hinder peer learning and weaken international networking among civil society organizations. Support their balanced geographical representation at sessions of the Convention's governing bodies by providing financial or in-kind assistance, in line with recommendations from the fifth edition of the 2005 Convention's Civil Society Forum.
- Strengthen civil society participation in policy monitoring by formalizing its regular involvement in future reporting cycles, including through systematic use of the Civil Society Organizations Form and its active engagement in the drafting of Quadrennial Periodic Reports.
- Leverage the mediating role of civil society organizations by adopting policies and measures that support their work with marginalized groups, improve data collection on barriers to cultural participation and encourage partnerships with local governments. Where appropriate, adopt shared or cooperative governance models that place civil society in key leadership roles.
- Formalize cultural and creative associations or professional organizations by establishing clear procedures for their recognition, especially within less formalized cultural domains. Where such organizations already exist, support their effective operation and their ability to advocate for the social and economic rights of their creative communities.
- Establish public funding mechanisms to ensure adequate and fair financing for civil society's work. Funding schemes should be long-term, recognize the value of learning and networking, and use transparent criteria to ensure the continuity of civil society's work.
- Ensure legal recognition of civil society's public-interest contributions to cultural life, and include these organizations in related support measures, such as tax relief and public funds.
- Contribute to the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, to sustain its continued role as one of the few mechanisms at the international level financing the work of civil society in advancing the goals of the 2005 Convention.
- Monitor and improve the operating environment for civil society organizations by regularly assessing challenges related to funding, legal frameworks, skills development and their overall ability to contribute to sustainable governance for culture.

For civil society organizations

- Strengthen cooperation and networking among civil society organizations, at national and international levels, to enhance sustainable resource mobilization, increase resilience in the face of funding cuts and reinforce collective advocacy for civil society's role in promoting the diversity of cultural expressions.
- Develop regional and thematic peer learning networks to foster inter-regional collaboration, especially for organizations from developing countries and marginalized communities that struggle to access partnership opportunities.
- Diversify funding sources, develop new funding strategies and leverage private financing, while pooling limited fundraising resources.
- Advocate for increased public investment in culture by raising awareness of the civic value of civil society organizations and their contributions to community development.
- Assess internal skill needs for organizational development and policy engagement, to inform the design of capacity-building programmes and to strengthen advocacy for enhanced support.
- Participate in the work of the Convention's governing bodies to strengthen the transparency, accountability and inclusivity of global cultural governance.

For UNESCO

- Refine monitoring and reporting frameworks by developing more nuanced indicators. For example, more attention should be given to indicators that concretely monitor whether (and how) civil society organization recommendations are being taken forward in cultural policy-making processes.
- Continue supporting international networking and peer-to-peer exchange among civil society organizations in the cultural and creative sector, including by facilitating their active involvement in the work of the Convention's governing bodies and its Civil Society Forum.
- Strengthen longitudinal monitoring and analysis of the operating environment for civil society, particularly in light of declining funding, regulatory constraints and shrinking civic space, in order to better assess how these factors will continue to affect civil society's capacity to engage in cultural policy making over time.



Chapter 5

The shifting borders of cultural mobility

Marie Le Sourd and Rana Yazaji

KEY FINDINGS

- Mobility is about freedom of movement and expression, and it equally concerns artists from all genders, all abilities and all contexts, war and conflict zones included.
- Imbalances in public support for inward and outward mobility, observed in the previous edition, persist. Parties to the Convention remain far more engaged in supporting outward mobility than inward mobility, especially in Western European and North American countries (96% for outward compared to 38% for inward). This disparity is reflected both in public funding allocations and in the number of policies and measures Parties report.
- Visa requirements remain the main structural barrier to the movement of artists and cultural professionals from developing countries, as new and increasingly stringent regulations are being implemented at points of departure, arrival and transit. Cooperation between ministries of the interior, foreign affairs and culture is therefore crucial to streamline visa processes.
- Preferential treatment still remains poorly understood and under-implemented in developed countries. However, a higher proportion of developing countries (56%) report providing public funds to specifically support South-South mobility for artists from other developing countries. To strengthen such measures, developed countries that are Parties to the 2005 Convention should engage more actively and work in closer coordination with civil society organizations.
- Experimental forms of mobility are emerging to address pressing issues such as forced displacement, the climate crisis and structural inequalities. In particular, mobility frameworks supporting at-risk and displaced artists are providing strong, flexible models characterized by open-ended, process-based and modular approaches that emphasize long-term artistic development and professional integration.
- Countries are developing in-border mobility initiatives to enhance the visibility and capacity of less connected or under-represented artists. However, this should not reduce investment in international cultural mobility.
- Bilateral and regional treaties, including international cultural cooperation agreements, have created opportunities for signatory countries to promote cultural exchange among artists and cultural organizations.
- Civil society organizations continue to be active in supporting artistic mobility, advocating to raise awareness among public bodies, providing access to information and resources through Mobility Information Points and developing innovative mobility programmes. However, greater synergies with Parties and funders should be encouraged to avoid duplication of efforts and prevent the reinforcement of inequalities in access, particularly in the context of South-South mobility.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has inspired new ways to reimagine artistic mobility, including greener, digital and hybrid approaches. However, if not contextualized, these models can become additional obstacles for artists and cultural professionals from developing countries or less accessible regions and territories.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT

Fair cultural mobility ensures equitable access to:



Work



Funding



Resources



Training



Networking

PROGRESS

56%

of developing countries fund **South-South mobility**



49.3%

of **mobility calls** supported individual residencies

Innovative mobility measures

- Digitizing visa processes
- Direct ministerial coordination
- Bilateral/regional cultural cooperation agreements



Civil society leads on:

- Training
- Advocacy
- Access to information through Mobility Information Points

CHALLENGES

96%

of developed countries reported supporting **outward mobility**



Only **38%**

support **inward mobility**



Visas

remain the **primary obstacle to cultural mobility**

EMERGING TRENDS

Re-emerging mobility trends post COVID-19

80%

of opportunities **in-person**



Only **4.3%** **fully online**



Shifting landscape of cultural mobility

- Addressing forced displacement, environment and mental health
- Adapting to hybrid, in-border and regional formats



There is a need for a shift in policy thinking and action to improve cultural mobility at multiple levels. This will require collectively reimagining cultural mobility practices, while addressing gaps in access as well as the paradoxes and complexities that characterize today's rapidly evolving cultural mobility patterns.

For Parties to the Convention

- Particularly those from developed countries, provide equal support for inward and outward mobility schemes in line with Article 16 on 'Preferential treatment for developing countries', ensuring that all programmes are based on transparent and open application guidelines.
- Particularly those from developed countries, facilitate access to their markets and mobility opportunities, especially by simplifying the visa process for short or temporary stays. Greater complementarity of actions between ministries of culture, interior affairs and foreign affairs should be encouraged.
- Engage more proactively in facilitating the visa process, while avoiding creating new constraints, such as restrictive definitions or lists of 'official' artists, that, even if intended to ease mobility, risk becoming tools of exclusion or censorship. At the same time, efforts should be strengthened to support temporary cross-border mobility through simplified and transparent procedures at points of departure, arrival and transit.
- Ensure the inclusion of civil society organizations in discussions and negotiations related to mobility, alongside public and private sector actors. This enables the development of cross-sectoral solutions that build on existing, proven support models (for example, independent mobility schemes) and information resources (for example, websites, guides and training toolkits) rather than creating new, potentially duplicative initiatives.
- Support civil society initiatives that facilitate access to information on cultural mobility (such as funding opportunities and administrative guidance) in synergy with international organizations, including UNESCO.
- Give greater consideration to the needs of at-risk and displaced artists and cultural professionals, both in emergency contexts and in relation to their long-term professional inclusion when relocated.
- Promote in-border and regional mobility to strengthen local and regional networks, as a complement to, and not a replacement for, cross-border mobility.
- Reinforce South-South mobility flows through adapted and consistent mechanisms, including exchange frameworks, funding opportunities and context-specific artistic platforms that account for geographical, transport-related, economic and cultural conditions in a comprehensive manner.
- Systematically integrate environmental sustainability, digital transformation, mental health and accessibility (including for artists with disabilities, at-risk artists and other vulnerable groups) in operational programmes supporting the mobility of artists and cultural professionals, particularly from developing countries. These dimensions should be embedded throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of mobility funds.
- Address the burdens faced by artists and cultural professionals, particularly those with different abilities, those who are at-risk or displaced, artist-parents, and members of less visible communities, including Indigenous artists.

For civil society organizations

- Proactively participate in policy discussions and negotiations with policy makers and funders at all levels of governance (international, national, regional and local).
- Strive to raise the visibility of initiatives that could be replicated or scaled up with additional funding at the national or cross-border level, including independent mobility funding schemes and organizations providing information on administrative matters, such as Mobility Information Points.
- Be involved in implementing the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Reflection Group on the implementation of Article 16 on 'Preferential treatment for developing countries'. Their involvement is particularly important for improving access to information on funding and administrative procedures, as well as in addressing ethical considerations related to the movement of people from developing to developed countries.

For intergovernmental organizations, including UNESCO

- Update the UNESCO monitoring mechanisms, including the Monitoring Framework and the Quadrennial Periodic Reporting of the 2005 Convention, with indicators that capture the evolving complexities of cultural mobility. This would enable more targeted data collection on mobility flows, policies and programmes adapted to specific contexts that address the needs of artists, including those related to green and digital mobilities, gender equality, accessibility and emergency situations.



Chapter 6

Tracking cultural goods and services in global trade

André Gouws and Jen Snowball

KEY FINDINGS

- Since 2005, global trade in cultural goods has grown significantly, doubling in value to reach US\$254.28 billion in 2023.
- Developing countries are increasing their share of cultural goods exports at a much faster pace than developed countries, growing at an average annual rate of 8.5% compared to 1.8% in developed countries. While China (19%) and India (6%) remain dominant, a wider group of developing economies are contributing to this growth.
- Upper-middle-income developing countries have increased their cultural goods exports and diversified their trade with both developed and developing partners. This has contributed to the geographical diversification of cultural goods trade and helped reduce the share of cultural trade occurring solely between developed countries from 2007 to 2023. By contrast, Least Developed Countries still represent only a very small share of global cultural goods trade.
- Global trade in cultural services has become increasingly significant in the post-COVID era, as many cultural goods dematerialize and move to digital formats. While developed countries still dominate the market, developing countries have strengthened their position, rising from 12% in 2010 to 20% in 2023.
- Developing countries are increasingly investing in e-commerce platforms and digital tools to promote their cultural goods and services, enhancing visibility, export potential and international reach.
- A greater share of Parties to the Convention report implementing export strategies or measures to support trade in cultural goods and services. This trend reflects increasing recognition of the creative economy as a driver of growth and development. For instance, 72% of the Parties reported export strategies related to the visual arts in 2021-2024, up from 48% in the previous period.
- Product development, Intellectual Property and branding represent the highest value-added stages of the value chain and offer strategic opportunities for capacity building and innovation.
- Between 2006 and 2022, US\$648 billion was allocated globally to Aid for Trade, yet only a small share of this funding targeted cultural and creative industries. While some countries have reported culture-focused Aid for Trade initiatives and included cultural exports in their national economic development strategies, Aid for Trade remains an underutilized tool for promoting a more balanced flow of cultural goods and services.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT

A balanced exchange of cultural goods and services is crucial for fostering:



Cultural diversity



**Fairer and more inclusive
global trade landscape**



**Local creative industries
and economic development**

PROGRESS

US\$118 billion → US\$254 billion
Global trade in cultural goods has doubled since the Convention's adoption



Upper-middle-income developing countries are the main drivers of more geographically diverse cultural goods markets

46%

of **global cultural goods exports** originate in **developing countries**

48% → 72%

of countries have **visual arts export strategies**, reflecting recognition of the sector's strategic value

CHALLENGES

Only 20%

of **global trade in cultural services** is held by developing countries

Out of US\$648 billion

allocated globally to **Aid for Trade**, only a small share targeted cultural industries

Only 0.5%

of **foreign-direct-investment stock** is maintained by developing countries

Only 5%

of the **global market use of Intellectual Property** is held by developing countries, reflecting weak Intellectual Property frameworks and enforcement

EMERGING TRENDS

Cultural goods shift to digital formats, post COVID-19

- Digitization drives growth in global cultural services trade
- Developing countries invest in e-commerce and digital tools to promote cultural exports
- Digital shift poses risks for environmental sustainability and cultural diversity



Varied approaches to cultural export promotion

- Developed countries more often use **financial incentives** to attract investment and boost export readiness
- Developing countries leverage cultural tourism through **festivals and trade events** to showcase local culture

Effective export strategies require:

- Enabling trade infrastructure and policies
- Strong **coordination** between trade bodies, ministries and the private sector
- Intellectual Property** protections
- Financial support**

For governments and public bodies

- Implement comprehensive export strategies that strengthen coordination among trade bodies, government ministries and the private sector; expand financial support mechanisms; improve trade infrastructure; reinforce Intellectual Property protection; and build the capacities of artists and cultural entrepreneurs to be competitive in international markets. These strategies should be fully integrated across institutions and tailored in particular to the needs of Least Developed Countries.
- Developed and developing countries should invoke Article 16 of the 2005 Convention more frequently when negotiating bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, especially given the increasing importance of digital services trade. Developed countries, in particular, are encouraged to grant preferential treatment to facilitate market access for cultural goods and services from developing countries and to support cultural cooperation through co-production agreements, knowledge sharing and capacity-building efforts that improve export readiness. Preferential treatment under Article 16 should be non-reciprocal and include measures such as tariff exemptions and simplified trade procedures.
- To achieve more inclusive and diversified global trade of cultural goods and services, the export capacity and readiness of Least Developed Countries should be strengthened through support for capacity development, market access and trade facilitation across both supply and demand dimensions. This support should be long-term and well-coordinated, with emphasis on improving digital infrastructure and comprehensive policies.
- To improve their trade position and competitiveness in global markets, developing countries' cultural and creative industries need to move up the value chain by creating distinctive cultural goods and services, supported by Intellectual Property protection and strategic country or regional branding initiatives.
- Developing countries should increase investment in trade infrastructure and place greater emphasis on promoting and regulating the trade of digital cultural services.
- Developing countries should consider attracting foreign direct investment in the cultural and creative sectors, ensuring complementary measures to strengthen local absorptive capacity, including human capital development and technology transfer.
- Developed countries should strengthen their Aid for Trade programmes for cultural and creative industries and e-commerce, and focus on helping Least Developed Countries build their cultural export capacity and trade infrastructure. Aid for Trade should more strongly prioritize digital trade capacity, in alignment with Sustainable Development Goal 8.B.

For governments and international organizations

- Promote international cooperation to support balanced and diversified trade in cultural goods and services. This includes helping under-represented countries build infrastructure, human capital and enabling policy frameworks. Cooperation should aim at reducing the digital divide and ensure inclusion in digital cultural services trade.
- Develop strategic partnerships with international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, United Nations Trade and Development and the World Intellectual Property Organization, as well as the private sector. These partnerships can pool together valuable expertise for developing comprehensive trade strategies and strengthening national trade capacities.
- Improve information systems that track and evaluate the international exchange of cultural goods and services and collect measurable and comprehensive data, including official development assistance and foreign direct investment data. Parties to the Convention are encouraged to use the revised UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics for data collection, to support reliable monitoring.
- Strengthen the export readiness of the creative sector by providing capacity building and e-commerce training. These programmes should equip artists and cultural entrepreneurs with skills to increase the marketability, visibility and competitiveness of their creative goods and services on the international market. Countries should also promote country-of-origin branding and leverage Intellectual Property to add value.
- Support South-South cooperation through, for example, reciprocal trade agreements, scholarships, training and the sharing of market access opportunities.
- Strengthen intersectoral linkages between the creative and tourism sectors via festivals, book fairs, cultural markets and trade shows.



Chapter 7

Reinforcing the Convention's influence in international fora

Véronique Guèvremont

KEY FINDINGS

- The analysis of the implementation of the 2005 Convention during the 2021-2024 period confirms the Convention's continued impact on traditional areas of cultural trade and highlights emerging challenges linked to AI and digital governance.
- Only 3% of the 269 trade agreements concluded since the Convention's adoption explicitly reference it, suggesting limited awareness among Parties and weak coordination between ministries of culture and trade.
- Between 2021 and 2024, 22 trade or economic partnership agreements involving at least one Party to the Convention were concluded. Cultural provisions remain consistent with previous trends but introduce no new approaches despite recent developments in the digital environment.
- Of these 22 agreements, 13 include a chapter setting out commitments on digital trade and three introduce new types of commitments specifically addressing Artificial Intelligence.
- Between 2021 and 2024, six of the 50 Bilateral Investment Treaties – involving nine Parties to the Convention – include at least one cultural clause aligned with the Convention's objectives. Although this figure represents an increase over previous years from 5% to 12%, the overall share remains low, indicating that few Parties consider the Convention's principles when negotiating such treaties. This may limit their ability to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions.
- While Parties to the Convention are actively engaged in international AI fora through strategies, working groups and regulatory initiatives, the practical implementation of Article 21 on 'International consultation and coordination' remains limited. Major AI frameworks, including the OECD AI Principles and the Global Digital Compact, largely overlook cultural diversity, even though AI both relies on and shapes cultural expressions. A notable exception is the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act, which explicitly links transparency obligations to copyright protection and thereby integrates cultural considerations into AI regulation.
- International fora and several recent legal instruments recognize the 2005 Convention as a key driver of sustainable and inclusive development, particularly in the context of a post-2030 development agenda. Article 21 is also recognized for helping integrate the Convention's principles into trade, investment, Intellectual Property, telecommunications and human rights frameworks.
- The Quadrennial Periodic Reports show that Article 16 remains insufficiently understood and implemented, with developed countries deploying only limited efforts to ensure compliance with their commitment.

When engaging in digital trade negotiations and AI cooperation frameworks:



Reaffirm the Convention's core objectives

- recognize the dual nature of cultural goods and services
- promote balanced cultural exchanges



Respect each Party's **sovereign right to adopt and implement cultural policies**



Include **cultural diversity as an explicit objective**

PROGRESS



Countries incorporate references to the Convention in multilateral/regional/bilateral legal instruments, in various fields of cultural cooperation, trade, Intellectual Property, sustainable development and human rights

2,544 cultural clauses relevant to the Convention have been included in **194** bilateral and regional trade agreements since the Convention's adoption



CHALLENGES

Only 3%

of **trade agreements** have **explicitly referenced the Convention** since its adoption, signalling **weak coordination between ministries** of culture and trade

Only 12%

of **Bilateral Investment Treaties** include cultural clauses aligned with the Convention's objectives, up from 5% previously

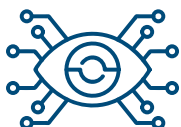
Preferential treatment

remains insufficiently understood and implemented by developed countries

EMERGING TRENDS

AI and the digital environment are key issues among **trade agreements** and **cooperation frameworks**:

Of 22 agreements, **13** include a chapter on **digital trade**
3 introduce new commitments specifically related to **AI**



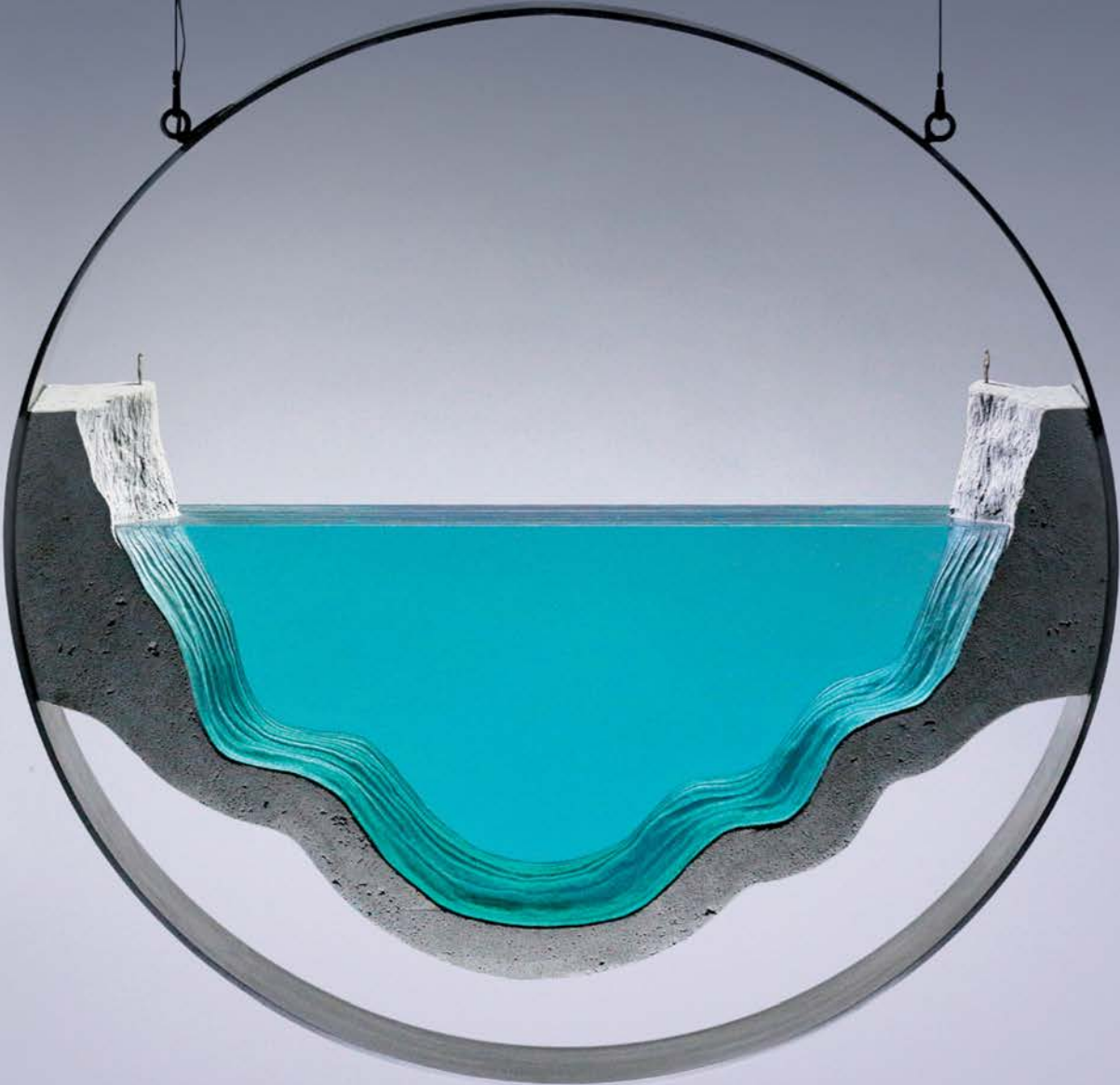
However, **culture remains absent from major AI frameworks** even though AI shapes and depends on cultural expressions

For Parties to the Convention

- Ensure that every new legal instrument – whether in cultural cooperation, trade, investment, Intellectual Property, telecommunications, sustainable development or human rights – explicitly references the 2005 Convention wherever relevant.
- Institutionalize interministerial coordination mechanisms between culture, trade, and other relevant ministries to ensure policy coherence and consistent implementation of the Convention’s objectives, as foreseen in Articles 21 ('International consultation and coordination') and 16 ('Preferential treatment for developing countries'). Such coordination should promote complementarity and coherence between cultural and trade commitments through systematic consultation during the preparation and negotiation of international legal instruments, such as trade agreements and Bilateral Investment Treaties, so that cultural considerations are integrated while safeguarding each Party’s sovereign right to maintain and adopt policies and measures for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions.
- Ensure that digital trade commitments in bilateral and regional agreements remain consistent with the Convention’s principles. This may require the incorporation of cultural exception or exemption clauses, the renunciation of non-discrimination commitments, and the introduction of references to the diversity of cultural expressions, including in cooperation provisions related to AI.
- At the negotiation stage, thoroughly review digital trade provisions – particularly those related to cross-border data flows, access to source code and data location – to safeguard regulatory space for policies applicable to the digital environment, including measures that promote the discoverability of local and national content.
- Closely monitor the ongoing negotiations on electronic commerce at the World Trade Organization to ensure that new commitments regarding non-discrimination, data flows, source code, recommendation algorithms and AI fully respect each Party’s sovereign right to adopt and implement cultural policies in the digital environment. In parallel, reaffirm the Convention’s core objectives – recognizing the dual nature of cultural goods and services, and promoting balanced cultural exchanges – when engaging in digital trade negotiations that may affect cultural diversity.
- Given the impact of AI on the diversity of cultural expressions, implement Article 21 and promote the Convention’s objectives and principles in fora developing AI governance frameworks. Parties should also take into account the 2021 UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence.
- Include cultural diversity as an explicit objective in AI cooperation frameworks and ensure that international standards uphold Intellectual Property rights and protect human creativity, in line with UNESCO standards.
- In any legal or trade disputes touching on cultural policies, invoke Article 20 of the Convention so that its principles are duly considered when interpreting or applying other international obligations.
- Developed countries should intensify efforts, both within UNESCO and other fora, to implement Article 16 by providing effective preferential treatment to cultural goods and services, as well as to artists and cultural professionals, from developing countries. For instance, measures promoting the discoverability of cultural expressions from developing countries could be included in cooperation frameworks or trade agreements, including for digital trade.

For Parties to the Convention and UNESCO

- Explore the feasibility of developing an Additional Protocol to the Convention to strengthen the protection and promotion of cultural diversity in the digital environment, especially in response to the growing use of AI in the cultural and creative sector.
- Establish structured dialogue and cooperation frameworks between Parties and UNESCO to address emerging challenges linked to AI and digital technologies and to facilitate the exchange of information, good practices and capacity building.
- Strengthen monitoring systems, capacity-building initiatives and the sharing of good practices to ensure that preferential treatment mechanisms are clearly understood and effectively implemented.



Chapter 8

Mind the gap: culture and sustainable development

Leandro Valiati

KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly all Parties (93%) have involved public cultural bodies and agencies responsible for culture in national development and sustainable development planning in 2021-2024. This share represents a significant increase from 76% in 2017-2020. The most significant increases occurred in Western Europe and North America (from 68% to 100%) and Africa (from 65% to 97%).
- Cultural and creative industries are gaining recognition as drivers of sustainable development. A large majority of Parties (85%) identify the sector as strategic within national development plans (NDPs) and national sustainable development plans (NSDPs), up from 63% in the previous reporting cycle. Progress has been particularly strong in developing countries, while developed countries have also reported notable gains (74%).
- While 77% of Parties now reference culture in their NDPs and NSDPs, only 56% set specific cultural goals – up from 44% in the last reporting period. The increase in setting specific goals has been largely driven by developing countries (from 40% to 59%). However, monitoring remains limited: only 25% of the measures integrating culture into sustainable development frameworks have been evaluated, limiting accountability and learning.
- Reported expectations regarding culture's contribution to cultural, social, economic and environmental outcomes have decreased. Cultural outcomes fell from 65% to 39%, and environmental outcomes from 17% to 11%. This trend suggests that although culture is mentioned in NDPs and NSDPs, its transformative potential – particularly in relation to climate action – could be more fully realized.
- Despite evidence that cultural and creative industries can advance environmental sustainability, few development plans explicitly link culture to climate goals. Carbon footprint measurement in the sector is minimal, and no global dataset on the sector's environmental impact exists. Exploratory analysis suggests that the cultural and creative industries generated approximately 1,028 million tonnes of CO₂ in 2022 – comparable to emissions from land-use change (1,145 million tonnes) but far below those from transport (7,941 million tonnes).
- Culture-led regeneration initiatives continue to expand at the local level. A growing share of Parties (85%, up from 73%) report culture-based regeneration initiatives at the regional, urban or rural level, highlighting local authorities as strategic partners. Growth has been strongest in the Arab States (up 36 percentage points) and Eastern Europe (up 25 points), both reaching 100%, while Western Europe and North America recorded a slight decline of 5 percentage points.
- Significant disparities persist in access to cultural infrastructure. Data on 28,000 geo-coded cultural facilities in 244 cities across 105 countries reveal inequalities between developed and developing countries. Access to cultural facilities remains particularly limited in low-income areas.
- Policies promoting cultural participation rose to 87%, up from 81%, reflecting recognition of culture's role in social cohesion. While developed countries continue to lead (93%), developing countries are closing the gap (rising from 76% to 84%). Reported measures highlight efforts to foster inclusion, particularly for youth, older adults and migrants.
- Integration of culture into development cooperation strategies is increasing, but funding remains limited. The share of Parties integrating culture into development cooperation rose to 58%, up from 49%, driven by developed countries (up 21 percentage points). The strongest regional increases occurred in Eastern Europe (from 14% to 41%) and Africa (from 39% to 62%). Despite this progress, overall funding remains modest: in 2022, only US\$231 million (0.15%) of Country Programmable Aid went to culture and recreation.
- The International Fund for Cultural Diversity, a multi-donor fund, is strategically positioned to support sustainable development initiatives aligned with national and global priorities. However, available resources continue to fall short of demand.
- International and regional development banks, particularly in Africa, are emerging as key investors in creative economies, signalling new opportunities for scaling cultural impact.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT

Culture is a key driver of sustainable development



Fostering social cohesion and community engagement



Spurring innovation and diversifying economic growth



Driving urban and rural revitalization efforts

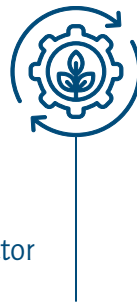


Promoting awareness and behavioural change on climate change

PROGRESS

Increasing recognition of culture as a **driver of sustainable development**

- **76% → 93%** Countries involve cultural agencies in sustainable development planning
- **63% → 85%** Countries identify the sector as strategic in NDPs and NSDPs



87% of countries have policies promoting **cultural participation**, reflecting culture's role in **social cohesion**

58% of countries integrate culture into **international development cooperation strategies**

CHALLENGES

Commitments on culture in development have not always translated into **concrete action**:

- While 77% of countries reference culture in their NDPs, only **56%** set specific cultural goals
- Few development plans **explicitly link** culture to **climate goals**
- Only **25%** of measures integrating culture in sustainable development frameworks have been **evaluated**, limiting accountability and learning



Disparities persist in access to cultural infrastructure, most notably in **low-income areas**

Carbon footprint measurement of cultural and creative industries is **minimal**

Funding for culture in **international development cooperation** is insufficient – only **0.15%** of Country Programmable Aid went to culture and recreation in 2022



Lowered expectations for outcomes from integrating culture
65% → 39% Countries expect culture to drive **cultural outcomes**

17% → 11% Countries expect culture to drive **environmental outcomes**



EMERGING TRENDS

Culture-led regeneration initiatives continue to expand at the **local level** – **85%** of countries report initiatives at **regional, urban or rural level**



International and regional development banks, particularly in Africa, are playing a growing role as **investors** in creative economies

For Parties to the Convention

- Strengthen the integration of culture in development planning.
 - Institutionalize the involvement of national cultural bodies and agencies in all national development plans (NDPs) and national sustainable development plans (NSDPs).
 - Move from symbolic recognition to concrete action by setting clear cultural objectives in NDPs and NSDPs, supported by measurable indicators.
 - Strengthen monitoring and evaluation by developing tools to assess culture-related measures, thereby helping to address accountability gaps and capture culture's multidimensional contributions to sustainable development beyond GDP.
- Harness culture for environmental sustainability.
 - Integrate culture-climate action into national and regional strategies, emphasizing the contributions of culture and the creative industries to green innovation, adaptation and mitigation efforts.
 - Develop standardized methods for measuring the carbon footprint of the culture sector, and encourage publicly funded institutions and projects to have sustainability plans and to provide detailed accounts of their CO₂ impact.
 - Promote greener management practices in cultural institutions, venues and events.
 - Build capacity and incentives for cultural institutions to adopt low-carbon practices.
 - Recognize and promote the role of culture in supporting behavioural change and the societal transformation needed to achieve environmental sustainability.
- Expand cultural infrastructure and participation.
 - Promote culture-based regeneration as a tool for sustainable urban and rural development. Ensure long-term investment through multi-level government involvement and co-funding, as well as through private sector partnerships.
 - Strengthen the ability of regions and communities to design policies and plan cultural development in response to local needs.
 - Scale up inclusive cultural participation policies by prioritizing disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Ensure that these policies are supported by adequate resources and reflect culture's role in fostering social cohesion.
 - Invest in low-income areas to reduce disparities in access to cultural facilities and services.
- Foster international cooperation.
 - Integrate culture systematically into bilateral, regional and international sustainable development frameworks and development cooperation strategies.
 - Increase the share of development aid allocated to culture, beyond the current 0.15% of Country Programmable Aid, and explore the feasibility of establishing a minimum benchmark.
 - Encourage voluntary contributions to the International Fund for Cultural Diversity, strengthening its capacity to support targeted sustainable development initiatives aligned with national and global priorities.
 - Engage regional and international development banks and private investors to expand financing for the creative economy, building on successful intra- and inter-regional initiatives.

For UNESCO and other international organizations

- Continue leveraging periodic reporting and existing programmes to generate evidence-based knowledge on culture and sustainable development, and share actionable insights with Parties and stakeholders to the Convention.
- Advocate for stronger recognition of culture's multidimensional contributions to sustainable development, beyond GDP metrics.
- Strengthen advocacy linking culture and environmental sustainability, emphasizing the role of creative expressions in fostering environmentally responsible behaviour. Promote the explicit and appropriate inclusion of cultural and creative industries in countries' National Adaptation Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions, helping to address major policy gaps.
- Develop a global framework to measure the environmental impact of cultural and creative industries, including carbon emissions and waste generation. Promote the integration of such assessments within national climate mitigation commitments, and encourage policy coherence across sectors.
- Promote the development of cultural infrastructure in low-income areas, including by engaging regional and international development banks as active investors to help reduce reported disparities.
- Monitor and update data on culture and recreation-related Official Development Assistance.
- Advocate at the international level for a progressive increase in the share of development aid allocated to culture within Country Programmable Aid.



Chapter 9

Gender equality: not an optional extra

Bridget Conor

KEY FINDINGS

- There has been a steady increase of gender-related measures reported by Parties, providing more evidence that gender equality is gaining prominence in global cultural policy making. This upward trend reveals both wider recognition of gender equality and a growing diversity of initiatives and actions across regions.
- Despite these indicators of progress, several countries have seen a decline or significant defunding of governmental bodies responsible for gender equality. The proportion of countries reporting ministries or government bodies that oversee gender equality for artists and cultural professionals has dropped from 72% in 2017-2020 to 69% in 2021-2024, with the most pronounced reductions occurring in developing countries. This decline suggests that gender equality is perceived by some countries as an added bonus rather than as a core mission. This perception is now dovetailing with a widespread backlash against, and rollback of programmes supporting, gender equality and inclusion.
- Global cultural policies continue to reflect gender imbalances. Efforts to promote women's participation in cultural life remain more focused on women as audiences and consumers than as creators, professionals or leaders. This trend mirrors persistent gender stereotypes and structural barriers, including unequal access to stable employment, large pay gaps and the chronic under-representation of women in leadership positions across arts and media organizations. While the global share of women heading national arts or cultural institutions has steadily increased from 31% in 2017 to 46% in 2024, the disparities between developed and developing countries have widened, with women representing 64% of leaders in developed countries but only 30% in developing ones.
- Amid the global contraction of government initiatives promoting inclusion and diversity, civil society organizations are taking the lead in advancing gender equality. They are adopting a wide range of measures spanning advocacy, policy monitoring and capacity building.
- Where gender-disaggregated data is collected consistently and over time, it provides clear evidence of how progress towards gender equality is being made. However, both horizontal and vertical gender segregation remain entrenched across cultural and media sectors, and overall, global data collection continues to be fragmented.
- Developing countries most frequently report training and mentoring schemes that foster professional development for women by equipping them with creative, technical and managerial skills. In contrast, developed countries most often report research and monitoring initiatives that track gender disparities and strengthen the evidence base for policy making.
- The wave of post-#MeToo measures represents important progress but should be understood in the context of increasing technology-facilitated gender-based bias, harassment and abuse. In this evolving area, all stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society organizations, multilateral organizations and researchers, need to build and share knowledge, particularly regarding emerging forms of gender-based bias and harassment occurring on social media and within GenAI environments.
- Gender-based segregation, bias and discrimination are newly prominent in digital workplaces and spaces. Women are being systematically excluded from these fast-growing digital creative sectors (such as the gaming industry) and face barriers in accessing highly remunerated positions.
- Digital platforms and tools have potential to support broader gender equality policies and objectives. Notably, training and capacity-building initiatives are supporting women artists, entrepreneurs and creators to acquire new skills on social media and other online tools, which they can use to produce, circulate and monetize their work.
- There is growing attention to gender diversity, with an increasing number of Parties and civil society organizations adopting gender-inclusive language policies across the creative sectors. These efforts are accompanied by initiatives to reduce the stigma faced by trans and non-binary populations, support the visibility of their work, and strengthen measures to prevent gender-based violence in the workplace.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT

Women creators face persistent barriers



Unstable work



Pay gaps



Under-representation in leadership positions



Online harassment



Horizontal and vertical gender segregation in tech-focused sectors

PROGRESS

Gender mainstreaming is expanding in cultural governance structures, closing gender equality gaps. These include:

- Training for public officials and interministerial task forces
- Knowledge exchange with other governments



Civil society is driving gender equality measures in advocacy, policy monitoring and capacity building, amid global contractions

Women's representation in cultural fields is rising

Biennale representation **42%** → **53%**

Best director **24%** → **28%**

Acts at electronic music festivals **9%** → **30%**

Top 100 most performed living composers **11%** → **32%**

CHALLENGES

- **Public bodies** responsible for gender equality are declining **72%** → **69%**
- **Gender stereotypes** persist in policy measures: Women are more often addressed as audiences/consumers (**82%**) than as creators, professionals or leaders (**77%**)
- **Women's leadership** in national arts councils in developing countries is declining **36%** → **30%**
- **Women** are substantially **under-represented in tech-focused sectors**



Tech-enabled gender bias, harassment and abuse are on the rise and need immediate action



EMERGING TRENDS

Policy focus differs:

From **developing countries** prioritizing training and mentoring



To **developed countries** focusing on research and monitoring

New areas strengthening gender equality policies



- Gender-diverse initiatives promoting inclusion and representation
- Measures addressing gender-based violence and safe workplaces
- Digital tools and platforms supporting gender equality through training and capacity building

RECOMMENDATIONS

For governments (ministries of culture, arts councils, funding bodies and regional and local authorities)

- Establish dedicated structures for gender equality within ministries of culture. These units should ensure effective coordination, implementation and monitoring of interventions designed to advance gender equality in the cultural sector.
- Integrate gender mainstreaming across national cultural policies and programmes by training public officials to apply gender perspectives in policy design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Encourage knowledge sharing between governments to promote effective and transferable approaches.
- Establish information systems that regularly collect gender-disaggregated data on cultural participation and leadership in areas such as women's access to resources and funding, workforce participation and representation in leadership positions. Use these data to conduct targeted research that can guide stronger evidence-based policies for gender equality.
- Implement programmes and measures that actively support women as creators, cultural professionals and leaders. More specifically, governments should:
 - Introduce temporary special measures, such as quotas and parity bonus mechanisms, as formal requirements within national funding schemes. These measures should require cultural employers and organizations to produce gender-disaggregated data.
 - Support funding streams and programmes that prioritize gender equality, intersectionality and gender diversity.
 - Strengthen frameworks that promote safe and inclusive working environments in the cultural and creative sector, and develop actionable measures to prevent gender-based violence online and offline.
 - Provide access to training and mentoring opportunities to support the professional development of women artists, particularly in emerging digital fields, and to reduce gender segregation across creative sectors and career levels.

- Recognize and support the valuable work of civil society organizations advocating for gender equality in culture and the arts. Strengthen their capacity by providing financial and institutional support, and actively partner with them to ensure that gender equality remains a priority area in future cultural policy efforts.
- Ensure that digital tools and platforms, including AI, are developed and used ethically, preventing them from perpetuating or exacerbating gender-based discrimination, stereotypes and violence.
- Integrate gender considerations into national digital capacity-building plans and programmes. Ensure that the perspectives and needs of women and gender-diverse creators are addressed.

For cultural institutions, media and civil society organizations (non-governmental organizations, academics and private companies)

- Collectively work with governments, cultural funders, ministries of culture and intergovernmental organizations to advance gender equality within the cultural and creative sector by sharing resources, data and expertise. Jointly review collaborative programmes – such as those focused on training and mentoring, gender representation, and eliminating gender-based violence – to identify successful models to build on.
- Apply lessons learned from successful gender equality programmes in the creative sector when designing new programmes in areas that require more research and policy attention, including video game production, online content creation and the development and use of new technology platforms.
- Design new gender-prioritized programmes and measures that focus on the impacts of AI on artists and cultural professionals.
- Collect data and information on gender-based bias and harassment cases that are emerging in social media, GenAI and related areas, and share ethical practices and measures that address these issues.

For intergovernmental organizations

- Prioritize and invest in gender-disaggregated data collection, both quantitative and qualitative. As part of this, explore opportunities to build globally representative datasets on cultural participation and cultural employment. A renewed commitment to data collection in these areas will also enable longitudinal tracking of the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging fields of cultural employment in the digital environment, including AI.
- When revising reporting frameworks (to reflect developments in the digital environment, for example), develop indicators that fill existing knowledge and experience gaps at the intersection of ethical AI and gender equality. This includes monitoring AI-related initiatives that affect artists and cultural professionals (as recommended by the Reflection Group on the diversity of cultural expressions in the digital environment) and ensuring that such monitoring is carried out with a gender lens.
- Provide technical and financial assistance to support countries in developing and revising cultural policies from a gender lens. Strengthen national capacities to monitor governance mechanisms that promote gender equality and track women's representation in leadership roles across the cultural and creative sectors.
- Work with Parties, other international organizations and civil society to advocate for the recognition of culture and gender equality as mutually reinforcing drivers of sustainable and inclusive development in the context of the post-2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Chapter 10

Global mandate: safeguarding artistic freedom in law, policy and practice

Andra Matei

KEY FINDINGS

- Artistic freedom is grounded in international human rights law, and its realization depends on effective legal protections and institutional safeguards, supported by an interconnected ecosystem of governments, civil society, regional human rights bodies and intergovernmental organizations. UNESCO's 2005 Convention and 1980 Recommendation are at the core of this normative and institutional architecture.
- Protective frameworks have expanded globally, with over 90% of Parties to the Convention reporting constitutional or national statutory guarantees for artistic freedom. Regional human rights mechanisms, international cooperation programmes and UN monitoring initiatives have further increased visibility and attention. Nevertheless, the growing formal recognition of artistic freedom and its rising prominence on international and regional agendas coexist with a persistent implementation gap. Legal frameworks are not always matched by the institutional capacity, enforcement tools and operational mechanisms to ensure effective protection.
- Political unrest, armed conflict and forced displacement have compounded the risks faced by artists and cultural professionals, and exposed the fragility of current protection systems. While engagement with the protection of artists at risk of or in exile is highest in Western Europe and North America (62%), the global response in this regard remains limited to 37% of Parties, highlighting an urgent need for increased international attention. Civil society organizations have played a crucial role in providing emergency support, but many initiatives remain fragile, under-resourced and dependent on short-term donor funding. Strategic action is required to move from temporary emergency relief towards durable pathways for sustainable professional reintegration.
- While 90% of Parties report national regulatory frameworks that guarantee the right to create without censorship or intimidation, legal repression remains one of the greatest threats to artistic freedom. Furthermore, only 61% of Parties report having independent bodies to monitor violations of artistic freedom, which contributes to a lack of systematic monitoring, fragmented data collection and limited accountability for infringements of this right.
- The misuse of legal frameworks, together with other widespread forms of pressure targeting artists and fuelling their self-censorship, underscore the urgent need to expand accessible legal support and defence mechanisms for artists.
- Artists – particularly those from marginalized communities – are also facing growing threats to their artistic freedom online. Key threats include digital surveillance and algorithmic bias. Despite this, only 27% of developing and 19% of developed countries report implementing measures specifically addressing artistic freedom in the digital environment. Regulatory gaps are particularly acute in corporate governance, highlighting the need for rights-based, culturally grounded digital governance frameworks and robust support systems.
- Artists continue to confront significant economic and social challenges, including precarious professional status, fragmented funding structures, insufficient social protection and disparities in equity. At the same time, reported action is increasing: 74% of Parties referred to implementing social protection measures (from 40% previously). Reports also point to concrete initiatives (including by civil society) to collect data and advance research on the working conditions of artists.
- Copyright frameworks are vital for upholding artists' economic rights, but their effectiveness is constrained by weak implementation and harmonization challenges.
- Equity in access to funding and inclusive policy frameworks remain under-developed, especially for vulnerable communities such as Indigenous Peoples, women, LGBTIQ+, youth and artists with disabilities. The latest global consultation shows that only 8% of countries reported adopting policies or measures for artists belonging to Indigenous communities. Despite clear links to international human rights commitments, integrated and intersectoral policy frameworks to address the compounded inequalities often faced by artists belonging to these vulnerable groups are still lacking.
- Civil society actors remain essential in filling institutional gaps. They lead monitoring efforts, raise awareness about the status of artists' rights, advocate for stronger protections and provide them with operational support. However, effective protection of artistic freedom requires deeper, more systematic collaboration between civil society organizations and governments. At the same time, civil society should be able to operate in a safe and enabling environment, free from undue constraints, including restrictive regulations and pressures related to political contexts or funding conditions.

CULTURE SNAPSHOT

Realization of artistic freedom depends on:



Effective legal protections



Institutional safeguards



Shared normative understanding



Strong policy frameworks

PROGRESS

Over **90%** of countries report **constitutional or legal guarantees** for artistic freedom, demonstrating growth in protective frameworks

Regional human rights mechanisms, international cooperation programmes and UN monitoring initiatives are raising visibility in international agendas



Civil society actors are playing a crucial role in:

- **Monitoring violations** of artistic freedom
- Raising awareness and **advocating** for artists' rights
- Providing **operational and emergency support**
- Advancing **research** on emerging issues

In response to economic and social challenges facing artists, **74%** of countries (from 40% previously) report implementing **social protection measures for artists**

CHALLENGES

Implementation gaps remain between legal frameworks and operational mechanisms

- **Only 61%** of countries have **independent bodies** monitoring artistic freedom violations
- **Copyright frameworks** for upholding artists' economic rights are weak

Legal frameworks are being **misused** to suppress artistic freedom, while **defence mechanisms** for artists are under-developed



Only 37% of countries have reported public initiatives to **protect artists at risk or in exile**, highlighting the fragility of protection systems

Equity gaps persist in targeted artist support measures, especially for vulnerable communities

EMERGING TRENDS



New threats to artistic freedom are growing **online**, including **digital surveillance and algorithmic bias**



Initiatives to protect artistic freedom are expanding:

- Temporary relocation schemes
- Emergency stipends
- Residency pathways
- Legal and psychosocial support
- Reintegration programmes

For Parties to the Convention

- Continue to engage with international and regional human rights frameworks, networks and mechanisms that reinforce recognition and build a shared normative understanding of artistic freedom, including initiatives across the UN system.
- Align national legal frameworks with international human rights standards by reviewing, amending or repealing restrictive legislation often used to silence dissent, such as blasphemy laws and those including criminal defamation provisions. Strengthen the enforcement of laws safeguarding artistic freedom, ensuring they are legally enforceable and effective in practice. Establish institutional safeguards, including autonomous and well-resourced national human rights institutions and ombudsperson offices, while enhancing judicial independence and institutional capacity.
- Reinforce support measures for artists displaced by political unrest and armed conflict. Embed emergency protection mechanisms – such as relocation schemes, stipends, residencies, and psychosocial and legal support – into national and international crisis-preparedness and response frameworks. These initiatives should provide durable pathways for professional development and social integration, while aligning with broader cultural policy frameworks and moving beyond temporary relief to address the chronic fragility of current systems.
- Invest in systematic data collection through national observatories, independent monitoring bodies and partnerships with civil society to close evidence gaps and track progress on artistic freedom. Monitoring should cover both overt violations and more subtle forms of restriction, for instance through administrative constraints.
- Guarantee accessible legal support and specialized defence mechanisms for artists, including those prosecuted under laws criminalizing defamation, blasphemy, or other provisions used to unjustifiably limit artistic freedom; and for those who are targeted by SLAPPs and other pervasive threats to artistic freedom.
- Close regulatory gaps by establishing human-rights-based and culturally grounded frameworks for digital governance and resilient protection systems for artistic freedom in the digital age. These should address threats posed by digital surveillance and algorithmic bias, and ensure that authors retain control over their moral and material interests, including in the context of Generative Artificial Intelligence.
- Expand social protection systems for artists by formalizing their professional status and integrating them into labour, welfare, health and Intellectual Property frameworks. This will ensure that progress is not precariously linked only to temporary crisis measures. Continue to collect quantitative and qualitative data related to artists' working conditions and support civil society in advancing important research in this area.
- Embed equity in funding access and policy design. Develop integrated and intersectoral policy frameworks, especially in support of artists from vulnerable communities, including women, youth, Indigenous communities and other minority groups. Commit to making the equitable distribution of opportunities a core principle of cultural policy through long-term structural transformation grounded in intersectional approaches.
- Support civil society's efforts to safeguard artistic freedom by reinforcing its capacity to carry out monitoring, research, awareness-raising, advocacy and training initiatives, and to provide essential operational support to artists at risk. Deepen sustained and systematic collaboration with civil society organizations, guaranteeing an enabling environment for their independent action free from undue political or funding constraints.

For civil society

- Continue leading independent monitoring efforts and advancing research, to make visible violations of artistic freedom, raise awareness about the status of artists' rights, advocate for their reinforced protection and provide them with emergency and operational support to bridge the persistent implementation gap between law and practice.
- Enhance strategic engagement with key institutions and human rights mechanisms at national, regional and international levels – including special procedures, quasi-judicial bodies and the UN Universal Periodic Review process – to advance artistic freedom. Strengthen collaboration with other stakeholder groups (such as journalists, academics, educators and human rights defenders) to foster joint action and accountability in support of freedom of expression in all its forms.

For UNESCO

- Actively cooperate with the international network of actors supporting artistic freedom – including governments, civil society, regional and international human rights bodies, and other intergovernmental organizations – to ensure cross-sectoral synergy.
- Elevate artistic freedom in high-level policy agendas, by promoting its inclusion through relevant international fora. Build commitment among governments and advocate for a coherent global framework that safeguards artistic freedom across regions and addresses the persistent implementation gap.
- Enhance coordination with regional organizations and other UN agencies to expand cooperation on awareness raising, advocacy, monitoring and capacity building in the field of artistic freedom. Support the integration of emergency protection and support mechanisms for at-risk and displaced artists into international emergency response frameworks, with attention to facilitating – beyond urgent forms of assistance – their sustainable professional reintegration.
- Continue implementing international cooperation programmes that support artistic freedom, such as the UNESCO-Aschberg Programme for Artists and Cultural Professionals, in collaboration with governments and civil society.
- Strengthen the implementation of international normative instruments, such as the 2005 Convention and the 1980 Recommendation, which contribute to shaping legislation, policies and measures impacting on artists' rights. Ensure complementarity and synergy so that the principles embedded in these legal instruments are translated into practice across regions and countries.

RE | SHAPING POLICIES FOR CREATIVITY

From music and film to literature and design, creative expressions give voice to the world's diversity. This diversity, in turn, can only thrive when creativity is nurtured by effective policies and institutions.

Twenty years ago, governments and civil society came together at UNESCO with a shared vision, leading to the adoption of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions – a landmark international treaty that continues to guide how countries support culture and creativity today. The *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity* report series monitors how this vision is put into action.

Drawing on data from more than 120 countries, this fourth edition analyses the latest trends, challenges and opportunities shaping creative sectors, as well as the policy responses designed to address them. Cultural governance today faces mounting pressures as digital transformation and deepening global inequalities raise fundamental questions about who can create and access culture. This report offers insights and recommendations to inspire policy action, supporting governments, institutions and civil society to establish the conditions for creativity to flourish.



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Diversity of
Cultural Expressions